

GAMBIT

CHESS EXPLAINED

THE MODERN BENONI

Zenon Franco

A new approach to understanding the chess openings



Hello to all!! Hola a todos!!

We're a group of chess fans who work together to produce chess materials. Together we cooperate in projects for the realization of our ideas for our beloved game.

Somos un grupo de fanáticos del ajedrez que trabajamos produciendo material ajedrecístico. Juntos cooperamos en la realización de diversos proyectos e ideas sobre nuestro amado juego.



Chess Explained: The Modern Benoni

Zenon Franco

Translated by Manuel Perez Carballo

GAMBIT

First published in the UK by Gambit Publications Ltd 2007

Copyright © Zenon Franco 2007

English-language translation © Manuel Perez Carballo 2007

The right of Zenon Franco to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN-13: 978-1-904600-77-0

ISBN-10: 1-904600-77-8

DISTRIBUTION:

Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.

Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821. E-mail: orders@Centralbooks.com

Gambit Publications Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.

E-mail: info@gambitbooks.com

Website (regularly updated): www.gambitbooks.com

Edited by Graham Burgess

Typeset by John Nunn

Cover image by Wolff Morrow

Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Gambit Publications Ltd

Managing Director: Murray Chandler GM

Chess Director: Dr John Nunn GM

Editorial Director: Graham Burgess FM

German Editor: Petra Nunn WFM

Webmaster: Dr Helen Milligan WFM

Contents

Symbols	4
Bibliography	4
Introduction	5
1 Classical Variation	6
2 Modern Variation	23
3 Fianchetto Variation	34
4 Mikenas, Taimanov and Four Pawns Attack	47
5 Knaak and Kapengut Variations	71
6 Systems with ♘f4 and ♘g5	84
7 Knight's Tour Variation	99
8 Transpositions and Move-Orders	107
List of Games	109
Index of Variations	110

Symbols

+	check	??	blunder
++	double check	Ch	championship
#	checkmate	corr.	correspondence game
!!	brilliant move	1-0	the game ends in a win for White
!	good move	1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
!?	interesting move	0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
?!	dubious move	(<i>n</i>)	<i>n</i> th match game
?	bad move	(<i>D</i>)	see next diagram

Bibliography

Printed

The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni, John Watson, Gambit, 2001
Beating the King's Indian and Benoni, Anatoli Vaïsser, Batsford, 1997
Beating the Fianchetto Defences, Efstratios Grivas, Gambit, 2006
Play the King's Indian, Joe Gallagher, Everyman, 2004
New in Chess Yearbook 65 to 79, New in Chess, 2002 to 2006
New in Chess Magazine, New in Chess, 1984 to 2006
Informator 1 to 96, Sahovski Informator, 1966 to 2006

Electronic

ChessBase Magazine 1 to 114, 1987 to 2006
The Modern Benoni, Jean Hébert, 1999

Engines

Fritz 9
Hiarcs 10
Shredder 9
Rybka 2.3.2a

Dedication

To Bernardo Wexler and Miguel Najdorf

Acknowledgement

Thanks to IM David Martinez Martin for his much-appreciated suggestions and corrections.

Introduction

The Modern Benoni is the name of the system originating from the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♗c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6, followed by 6...g6 and the development of the king's bishop on the long diagonal.

The first thing to notice after the pawn exchange is that White is left with an extra pawn in the centre and the kingside, whereas Black has a majority on the queenside. This determines each side's initial stronghold: Black will have a powerful g7-bishop, occupying the open diagonal, whereas White can place a strong knight on c4, attacking the weakness on d6, and supporting the main thematic central break, e5.

It is impossible to list here all the typical tactical and strategic motifs for both sides. What can be said is that generally White plays in the centre and kingside, and Black on the queenside, with the advance ...b5 as the main initial aim. However, the roles are often reversed: White can break with b4 and open the queenside if that is to his advantage, whereas Black can make progress on the kingside – everything will depend on the pawn-structure and the positioning of both sides' pieces.

The Modern Benoni is a defence based on counterattacking; rather than aiming at equalizing slowly, it creates an immediate imbalance. It is an ambitious defence, although not devoid of risk: having a pawn less on the kingside implies that Black's king will often be more vulnerable than White's.

Black has an enormous variety of tactical resources, so it is not strange that it was chosen by grandmasters who excelled in dynamic play, such as the young Mikhail Tal, then Bobby Fischer, Garry Kasparov, and nowadays Veselin Topalov, although it has occasionally attracted masters of a different style too, like Anatoly Karpov and Vladimir Kramnik. It has been employed in three World Championships, by Tal, Fischer and Kramnik, the latter two when behind in the match and looking for a win: Fischer was 2-0 down in 1972 against Spassky, and Kramnik needed a victory in the penultimate game of his 2004 match against Leko.

There are seven main chapters in the book, and there is a description of the contents at the beginning of each of them. At the end of each chapter I sum up the most notable plans and tactical motifs for each side that we have seen in the games and their notes. In these conclusions we shall see that many plans for both sides appear time and again, but the evaluation changes: a plan is not always good; it depends on how the forces are deployed. For instance, Black's break ...b5 is an aspiration always to be considered, but the way to achieve it changes, and the result can be negative too; for example, if White can advantageously confront this with the plan of playing b4, achieving a blockade on the queenside, in order to control the centre and kingside, or also if White can exploit the weakness of c6. These are only examples – we are going to see the details in each game.

Chapter 8 is about transpositions and about the pros and cons of trying to achieve a Modern Benoni with a different move-order, an important consideration given that some of the most dangerous anti-Benoni lines are not possible via some of these sequences.

1 The Classical Variation

The Classical Variation is reached after the natural developing moves of the white kingside; e.g., 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4 ♙g7 8 ♙e2. This has been the main line of the Benoni for decades. White first makes his ‘mandatory’ moves, delaying the decision of where to develop his c1-bishop as well as the manoeuvring plans of the f3-knight.

Black has three basic routes. One is to play with ...♙g4 in order to get rid of the clumsy bishop and make the push e5 less strong by exchanging off the f3-knight. We see this idea in **Game 1**. After taking on f3, Black attains greater control of the important central e5- and d4-squares. White’s bishop-pair is not immediately telling, and his central majority is for the time being hindered by his own pieces. In the game, Black played on the kingside, and White should have replied more energetically on the queenside. This scenario is not the most usual one, but it isn’t odd in this line either. In the notes to the moves we shall see other typical plans.

Game 2 features the development ...♘a6 and ...♘c7. The main idea is to prepare the thrust ...b5. An added benefit is that it puts pressure on d5, which can hinder White’s break with e5. Also the control of b5 allows Black access to this square in case of a premature a5 by White – this is also a common theme in other lines with ...♘c7. Sometimes it is the f6-knight that moves to c7. In the struggle of kingside against queenside, White attacked with f5, since e5 was difficult to achieve, exploiting the fact that Black couldn’t use the e5-square.

In **Game 3** Black plays ...♘bd7. Unlike in the line ...♘a6-c7, Black isn’t supporting his ...b5 break, so he is virtually renouncing play on the queenside for the time being. Instead his pieces operate more on the centre and kingside, so the ...f5 break, after suitable preparation, is a major idea. In the game ...♘e5 and ...g5 were played, an idea that became very popular in the 1970s following its use by Fischer.

The move-order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♙g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♙e2 ♘a6 10 0-0 is used in **Game 4**. We see that White played 7 ♘d2, ‘threatening’ to enter the Knight’s Tour Variation (Chapter 7), but he reverted to a Classical set-up, having prevented the line ...♙g4 which we see in Game 1. This is at the cost of playing ♘d2 voluntarily, without Black inducing it with ...♞e8. There can follow 10...♞e8, transposing back to a standard Classical. However, Black also has the option of playing 10...♘e8 and a quick ...f5, which is what he tries in our main game here.

Game 1 [A75]

Alexei Korotylev – Vladimir Akopian

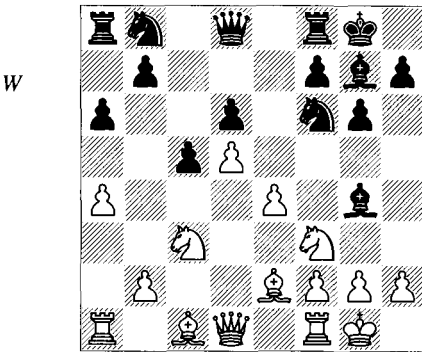
Moscow 2006

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4 ♙g7 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6

This move regularly appears in most lines of the Modern Benoni: it prepares the advance

...b5 by controlling the b5-square, and it also prevents a possible ♟b5 by White. In the note to Black's 11th move below we shall also see a specific tactical line where it is in Black's interest to have inserted the a-pawn moves.

10 a4 ♖g4 (D)



This was Kasparov's favourite line when he was younger. Getting rid of the bishop gives the black pieces more space and means they won't be tripping over each other's toes.

11 ♖f4

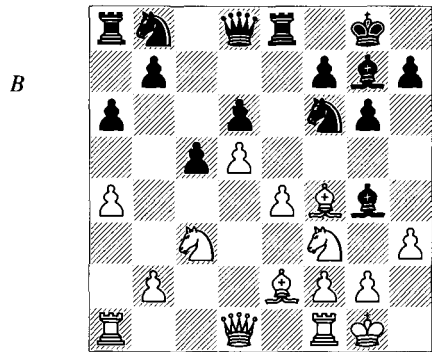
This is the most popular move; 11 ♖g5 is similar. Putting the question to the g4-bishop with 11 h3 is not useful since Black's idea is to exchange it, sometimes even without provocation.

The only truly independent option is 11 ♜d2, avoiding the exchange of the f3-knight. However, this idea doesn't seem to cause much trouble when it also blocks in the c1-bishop; after 11...♙xe2 12 ♜xe2, there can follow 12...♜bd7 13 a5 (or 13 ♜c4 ♜b6 14 ♜e3, which can transpose after 14...♜e7 15 a5 ♜bd7) 13...♜e7 14 ♜c4 ♜e5 15 ♜b6 ♜ae8, and Black is ready to play ...♜fd7, getting rid of the intruder on b6. In Harikrishna-Bu Xiangzhi, Lausanne 2001, there followed 16 ♖g5 h6 17 ♖h4 g5! (there are other moves, but this one is the clearest: White cannot exploit the weakness of f5) 18 ♖g3 ♜fd7, and Black is ready to play ...f5, activating all his pieces.

11...♙xf3

Now that the c1-bishop has been developed, 12 ♜d2 is more of a positional threat, so this exchange is considered to be good, though not wholly mandatory.

In Uhlmann-Fischer, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970, Black chose 11...♜e8. The usual continuation is 12 ♜d2 ♙xe2 13 ♜xe2, and in order to develop his b8-knight Black drives back the f4-bishop with 13...♜h5 14 ♖e3 ♜d7, etc. In the game 12 h3? (D) was played.



This was met by the combination 12...♜xe4!. If 13 hxg4 there follows 13...♙xc3 14 bxc3? ♜xc3, winning. White continued 13 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 14 ♖g5 ♜e8 15 ♖d3, and Black achieved a material advantage with 15...♙xf3 16 ♜xf3 ♜b4.

For the combination to be sound, it is essential that the moves ...a6 and a4 have been played, as Korchnoi showed almost 50 years ago. After 9...♖g4 10 ♖f4 ♜e8 11 h3 it is wrong to play 11...♜xe4?, because the absence of the moves ...a6 and a4 is exploited with 12 hxg4 ♙xc3 13 ♖b5!, when White wins material. In Korchnoi-Lutikov, USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1959, there followed 13...♙xb2 14 ♖xe8 ♜xe8 15 ♜e1 ♖xa1 16 ♜xa1 f5, and White exploited the weakness of the black king brilliantly and vigorously: 17 ♖h6 ♜e7 18 ♜g5 ♜e5 19 ♜b1 ♜xd5 20 ♖xe4!, and confronted with 20...fxe4 21 ♜b2 ♜e5 22 ♜xb7, Black resigned.

12 ♙xf3 ♜e7 13 ♜e1

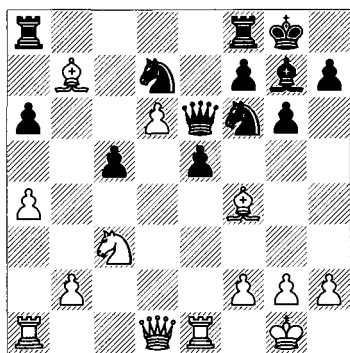
13 ♜d2 is of similar value. White has two main plans: one is to play on the queenside with a5 and go after the break b4, which is not easily accomplished; the other one is to start rolling his kingside pawns. In order to do this, he needs to manoeuvre with his bishops and open the way for the f2-pawn. The f3-bishop has to move and with 13 ♜e1 the e4-pawn is protected in order to regroup the bishop. From the f1-a6 diagonal the bishop hinders the advance ...c4

by Black, and puts pressure along that diagonal on the important points b5 and a6.

The a5 advance has a good point in that it delays ...b5, but against it there is the fact that it weakens White's control over b5. It can be played almost on every move, but if it is played too early it makes Black's task all the easier, for he can then play with a clear target.

The break e5 is in the offing, but it can only be achieved quickly through violent means. Here it is possible: 13 e5 dxe5 14 d6 ♖e6 15 ♙e1 ♜bd7 16 ♙xb7 (D).

B

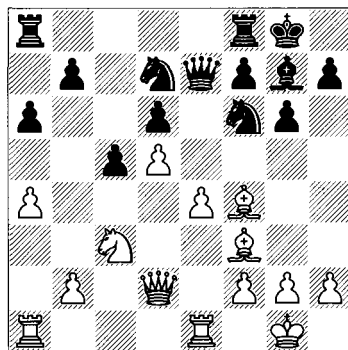


Now 16...♙a7! is best, defending the a6-pawn and reserving b8 for the other rook. This has made the whole line obsolete (it used to be popular 20 years ago). The game Vitiugov-Poluliakhov, Ekaterinburg 2002, didn't change this evaluation: there followed 17 ♙c6 ♙b8 18 ♙d2 (forced, defending b2; White was no more successful with other tries, such as the attempt to exploit the pin with 18 ♙xe5?! ♜xe5 19 f4, because Black defends and keeps the material plus after 19...♜xc6! 20 ♙xe6 fxe6 21 ♙e2 ♜d4 22 ♙c4 ♜d7 23 ♙b1 ♙b4, as in Vermaash-Pinchuk, corr. 1997) 18...♙b6! 19 ♙xd7 ♜xd7 20 ♙ad1 ♙ab7 21 ♙d3 ♙f8, and Black had seized the initiative.

13...♜bd7 14 ♙d2 (D)

Now 14 a5 is hasty. Ahlander-Marin, Gothenburg 2001 continued 14...♙ab8 15 ♙c2 ♜e8!, which is especially attractive: the knight will be very useful on the queenside, threatening ...♜c7-b5-d4. There followed 16 ♙e2 ♜c7 17 ♙f1 b5 18 axb6 ♙xb6 19 ♙ad1 ♙b4, and Black, with his active pieces, could be satisfied with the opening.

B



Black has three main plans. One is to play on the queenside, going for ...b5, whether White has played a5 or not. In order to do this he must move a rook to b8. The king's knight can also provide useful assistance with the manoeuvre ...♜e8-c7. On c7, the knight supports ...b5 and protects a6, and if White has played a5, the knight can use the b5-square as a springboard to settle on d4.

The other main plan is to play on the kingside with ...h5 and ...♜h7, intending ...♜g5 or ...g5 and perhaps ...g4.

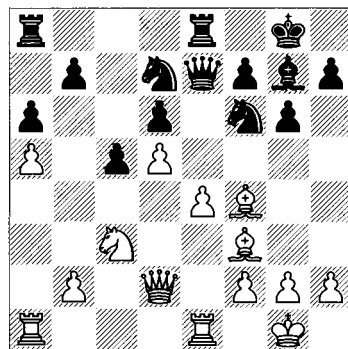
A third idea is to play ...c4 and continue with ...♜c5, ...♜fd7, ...♜e5, etc., which White will of course try to prevent, for he cannot allow a knight on d3. For this idea it is necessary to play ...♙ac8, supporting the c4-pawn, while ...h5 is also useful to prevent an annoying ♙g4 by White.

14...♙fe8

By occupying e8, Black gives up the first plan mentioned above, but keeps the option of the other two. Playing ...h5 will be necessary, but the most effective move-order is not yet clear.

15 a5 (D)

B



15...h5

Against 15...♖ac8 White can prepare the break b4 with 16 ♖a4, followed by moving the a1-rook off the long diagonal. 16 ♕d1 has also been played, by which the bishop heads for c2 to control d3, forestalling the manoeuvre ...♗d7-c5. 16...♗e5 17 ♖a4 c4 and now:

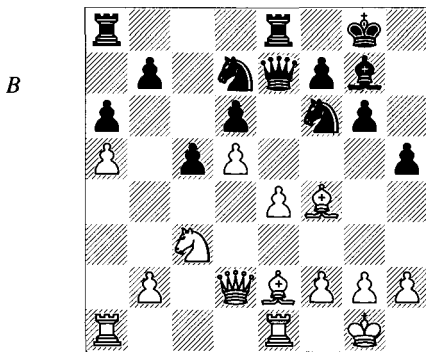
a) 18 ♖b6 is well met by 18...♗d3!. After 19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 White cannot keep the exchange because of the great activity of Black's minor pieces; e.g., 20 ♖e2 ♗xe4! 21 ♖e3 ♖f6 22 ♖xe4 ♖xf4, and the pawns on b2 and d5 cannot be defended.

b) White chose 18 ♕c2, controlling d3, in Cu.Hansen-Jobava, Skanderborg 2005, and Black opted for 18...♗h5, leading to great complications. The most natural continuation was the regrouping 18...♗fd7.

16 ♕e2 (D)

White wants to play ♕f1 to decide later on how to continue, but retreating the bishop so soon from the d1-h5 diagonal gives Black more freedom, as we shall see.

The main alternative is 16 h3, preventing 16...♗g4 and ...♗ge5, when Black can play both 16...♗h7 and 16...♖ac8.

**16...♗h7**

Reaching one of the most typical positions in the line. Black hopes to expand on the kingside with ...g5. The alternative is again 16...♖ac8.

17 ♕f1

Marin suggested 17 ♖ab1, trying to make progress on the queenside. Black can then hinder the advance 18 b4 with 17...♖f6, the idea being, for instance, 18...g5 and 19...♖g6, which has been played in similar positions.

17...g5

This advance is now possible straight away, for the h5-pawn is not under attack. The f5-square is abandoned but Black considers that the white pieces cannot exploit this.

18 ♕e3 ♖f6

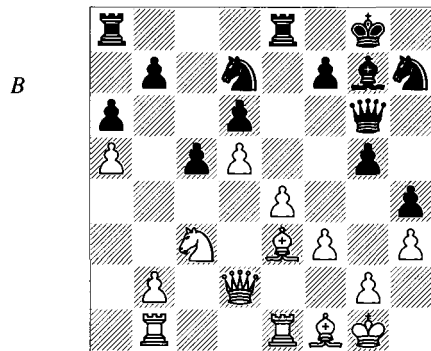
Heading for g6.

19 f3 h4

Threatening a future ...h3 to weaken White's structure.

20 h3

Preventing the ...h3 advance once and for all, although the move entails a slight risk of ossifying the structure by placing yet another pawn on the same colour squares as the f1-bishop. Let's not forget that White has two bishops, 'demanding' mobile pawns. Of course, the black knights want exactly the opposite.

20...♖g6 21 ♖ab1 (D)**21...♖ac8?!**

This is a logical move, seeking to prevent the advance 22 b4. However, it is not effective, as it fails in this aim. Marin suggested 21...♗e5 to meet 22 b4 with 22...c4, when the knight is ready to go to d3.

22 ♗d1

Very optimistic: White plans ♕f2 and ♗e3-f5, which Black cannot allow. Another idea is 22 b4!, to meet 22...cxb4 with 23 ♖a4, and also 22 ♖a4, in order then to play b4.

22...♗e5 23 ♕f2

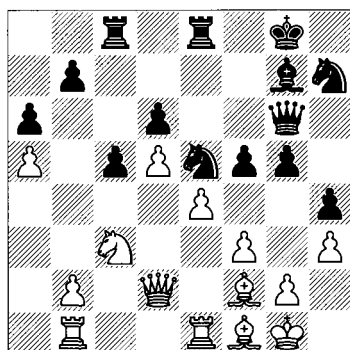
23 b4 was still possible.

23...f5!

Of course! Black prevents the knight from getting to f5.

24 ♗c3 (D)

B



Despite Black's progress on the kingside, and the two tempi lost, White's position is solid. His plan is simple: to break with b4. Meanwhile Black must seek 'something' on the kingside, which is less clear.

24...fxe4 25 ♖xe4 ♜f8 26 ♖h1 ♜f4

The idea is ...♜cf8, and perhaps ...g4. The accumulation of black forces on the kingside makes us think that that 'something' must appear.

27 ♖e3 (D)

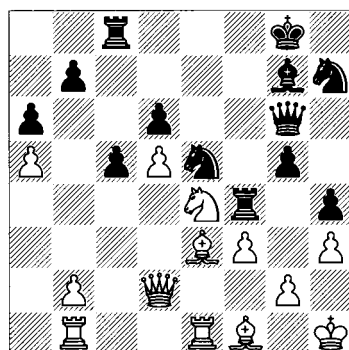
Again 27 b4! was tempting.

27...♜xe4

Forced. The exchange is not telling yet.

28 fxe4 ♜f8

B



All the black pieces are concentrated on the kingside, preparing the break ...g4.

29 ♖e2 ♜f6 30 ♖g1 g4! 31 ♖xg4 ♜fxg4 32 hxg4 ♜f3+??

This combination appears unsound. 32...h3! would have opened up the defences of the white king, with a decisive attack for Black.

33 gxf3 ♜xf3 34 ♖e2 ♜g3+ 35 ♜g2??

With 35 ♜f2!, the outcome could have been different.

35...♜xe3!

Now White won't be able to hold against Black's initiative.

36 ♜e1 ♜f3 37 ♖h1 ♖e5 38 ♜e3 ♜f1+ 39 ♜g1 ♜f6 40 ♜e2 ♜f2 0-1

Game 2 [A79]

Vladimir Kramnik – Veselin Topalov

Dortmund 2001

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♜c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♜f3 g6 7 e4 ♖g7 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♜e8 10 ♜d2

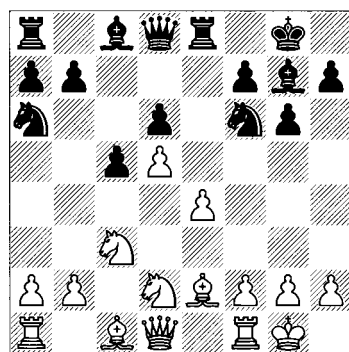
This move is a logical way to defend e4: it clears the path of the f2-pawn, and at an appropriate moment the knight will go to c4 to exert pressure against d6. The alternative 10 ♜c2 was never very popular. Black can reply 10...♜a6, with even more reason, since Black has ...♜b4, harassing the white queen, and 10...♖g4 is possible too.

10...♜a6 (D)

This move is typical of the Benoni – we shall see it in many lines.

11 f3

W



Firmly protecting the e4-pawn so that the d2-knight can move: it can now go to c4. For 11 f4 see Game 15.

11...♟c7 12 a4

Now Black can decide between two different plans: keeping to the original idea of ...♟a6 (i.e. playing on the queenside) by preparing ...b5, or seeking counterplay on the kingside with the break ...f5.

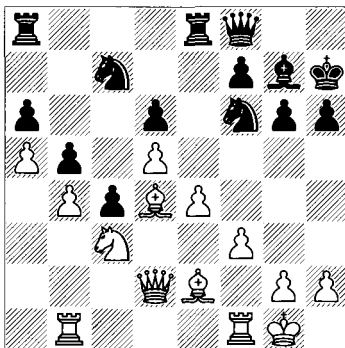
12...♟d7

Black chooses to prepare ...f5. The main alternative is to prepare ...b5 with a typical manoeuvre: 12...b6 13 ♟c4 ♟a6 (in order to get rid of the clumsy bishop and eliminate the annoying knight that is putting pressure on d6) 14 ♟g5 and now 14...♟d7 is considered the most flexible. Black wants to play ...♟xc4, ...a6 and ...b5, although it is best to delay ...♟xc4 for the time being and make other useful moves such as ...♟d7 and ...♟b8 to prevent White from opposing ...b5 more freely.

Note that the mere act of playing ...b5 doesn't guarantee a good position. Let's see some instructive examples where Black played to achieve this push with varying degrees of subtlety: 14...h6 15 ♟e3 ♟xc4 16 ♟xc4 a6 17 ♟d2 ♟h7 18 ♟ab1 (an important move: White plans to curb ...b5 with b4) and now:

a) 18...♟d7 19 b4 b5 20 ♟e2! (with the black rook on a8 it is better not to open the a-file with 20 axb5) 20...c4 (an unpleasant decision here: Black is forced to give up the d4-square; 20...cxb4?! 21 ♟xb4 isn't any better, when 21...a5? is met with 22 ♟xb5, which here doesn't even give up the exchange) 21 a5 ♟e7 22 ♟d4 ♟f8 (D).

W

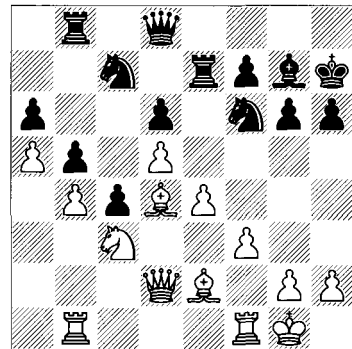


This is an ideal position for White: Black has no counterplay on the queenside, White has managed to control the d4-square, and the

c3-knight is an effective blockader of the black passed pawn. White just has to prepare the advance of the central majority. In Reshevsky-Ra.Garcia, Buenos Aires 1970 there followed 23 ♟d1! (to defend e4 with ♟c2) 23...♟d7 24 ♟xg7 ♟xg7 25 ♟c2 ♟e7 26 ♟be1 ♟e8 27 f4 ♟ef6 28 ♟e2 ♟h8 29 ♟fe1 ♟g8?! 30 e5! dxe5 31 d6 ♟e6 32 f5! ♟f6 33 fxg6 fxg6 34 ♟e4, and White's position was overwhelming. In this game Black could not prevent White's plan.

b) Let's see an example where he defends more effectively: 18...♟b8 19 b4 (the drawback of the early exchange on c4 is that it makes 19 ♟d3 easier, a move which Ivanchuk considered preferable) 19...b5 20 ♟e2 c4 (in case of 20...cxb4?!, White gets very good compensation for the exchange after 21 ♟xb4 a5 22 ♟xb5 ♟xb5 23 ♟xb5 ♟e7 24 ♟e2, followed by ♟d4) 21 ♟d4 ♟e7! 22 a5 (D).

B

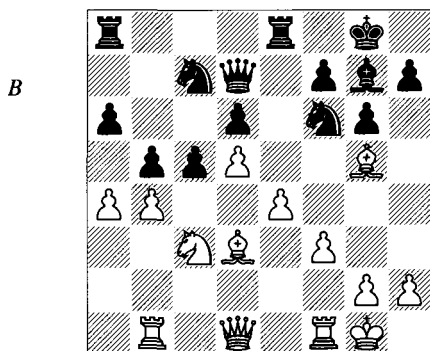


White plans to continue, as we saw, with ♟d1-c2 and f4. In Ivanchuk-Manor, European Junior Ch, Groningen 1986/7 Black prepared an excellent regrouping: 22...♟h8! 23 ♟bd1 ♟ce8! 24 ♟fe1 ♟d7! 25 ♟xg7 ♟xg7. Unlike in the previous game where the black knights remained passive on f6 and c7, here Black is ready to counterattack with ...f5. There followed 26 f4 f5 27 ♟f3, and now Black should have played 27...fxe4, with a reasonable game: after 28 ♟xe4 ♟f8!, followed by ...♟be8, the g7-knight has a good square on f5.

Going back to 14...♟d7, White has several options. One is 15 b3, to prevent the capture ...♟xc4, since White would retake with the pawn, bolstering d5, and neutralizing the break ...b5. So as not to end up very passive, Black

must strive for the break ...f5. He does so by exploiting the undefended c3-knight: he plays 15...♖h5 followed by ...f5.

Another idea is the already known 15 ♖b1, which Black can meet with either 15...♖ab8, in order to take on c4 later on, or leaving the rook on a8, which has its advantages: it is possible to play 15...♙xc4 16 ♙xc4 a6 17 b4 b5 18 ♙d3 (D).



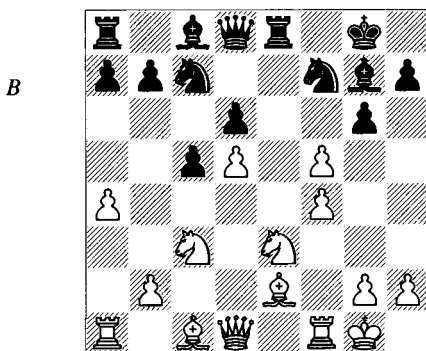
Now Black decided to play 18...c4 in Beliavsky-Portisch, Szirak Interzonal 1987. The importance of this passed pawn must not be underestimated. In the middlegame it is not very useful, but in the endgame it is a completely different story. There followed 19 ♙c2 bxa4! (essential so as to retain a free hand) 20 ♙xa4 ♖b5, when White should have played 21 ♗d2 ♗b7 22 ♙xb5 axb5 23 ♖a1 ♖d7, with even chances. Instead, he lost a tempo with 21 ♖h1?. After 21...♗b7 22 ♙xb5 axb5, White had problems on the long diagonal and on the a-file. There followed 23 ♙e3 (the aforementioned drawbacks are felt in the event of 23 ♗d2 ♖a3 24 ♙e3 ♖xc3! 25 ♗xc3 ♖xe4, followed by ...♖c3 and ...♖d5) 23...♖g4! 24 ♙d4 ♖e3 25 ♙xe3 ♙xc3 26 ♙d4 ♙xd4 27 ♗xd4 ♗a7!, and the c4-pawn will be more important than White's central majority if queens are exchanged, or if the black king can avoid the danger. Black has ...f5 to weaken White's structure.

There are more moves, like 15 ♗d2, when the ideas we saw are relevant after 15...♙xc4 16 ♙xc4 a6.

13 ♖h1

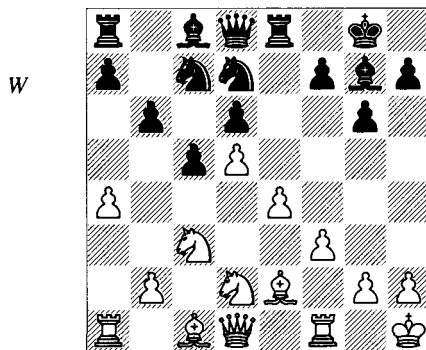
This move is useful if the game opens up. Let's see an example where its absence was

felt: 13 ♖c4 ♖e5 14 ♖e3 f5 15 f4?! (played before exf5 to prevent the knight from getting to g6, but 15 exf5 is better, as we shall see) 15...♖f7 16 exf5 (D).



Black now played the surprising and instructive idea 16...♖h6! in Toth-Matulović, Budapest Zonal playoff (2) 1972. He wants to retake with the knight on f5, and if White acquiesces, then Black achieves rather good piece-play: 17 ♖h1 ♖xf5 18 ♖xf5 ♙xf5. Compare this with the main line where Black has a weak pawn on f5. White, however, continued capturing by 17 fxg6?! whereupon Black showed the tactical basis for his idea: after 17...♙d4 18 gxh7+ ♖h8 19 ♖f3 ♖g4 20 ♗d3 ♗h4!, White couldn't solve his problems.

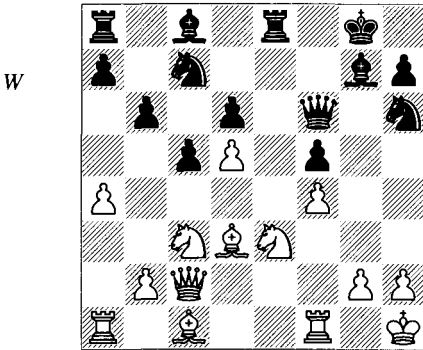
13...b6 (D)



14 ♖a3

A novelty at the time, in a position that has occurred many times in practice over several decades. The most common is 14 ♖c4, which had already been discussed by the same players a few months earlier: 14...♖e5 15 ♖e3 (to drive

away the e5-knight with f4) 15...f5 (this blow was on the cards; 15...♖b8 has also been played, continuing the preparations of ...b5) 16 f4 ♘f7 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♔d3 (White increases the pressure on the weak pawn, but there are enough defensive resources) 18...♞h6 19 ♖c2 ♗f6 (D).



White keeps pounding at the weakness of f5, and this gives him some advantage, but it is not of a serious nature. Both Fischer in the 1960s, and Topalov in the new millennium, have endorsed Black's position. The defence of f5 doesn't paralyse Black, and let's remember that the d5-pawn is also weak. In Kramnik-Topalov, Monte Carlo (Amber rapid) 2001 there followed 20 ♔d2 ♔d7 21 ♖f3 (the rook is heading for g3, to harass the g7-bishop, or to h3, as in the game) 21...♞h8 22 ♖af1 ♔e7 23 ♖h3 (hitting the h6-knight; if 23 ♘cd1 Black strikes against the weakness on d5 with 23...♗f7!) 23...♗f7! (if 23...♖ae8, there follows 24 ♘cd1!, when 24...♗f7 doesn't work: 25 ♔c3 ♘xd5 26 ♔xg7+ ♞xg7 27 ♔c4 ♘xe3 28 ♘xe3, winning material; the influence of the h3-rook becomes apparent) 24 ♘c4 ♗g6 (not 24...♗f6 since the tactical weakness of the h4-d8 diagonal shows after 25 ♔e1!; Kramnik suggests 24...♘xd5, leading to complications in which Black seems to hold his own) 25 ♖g3 ♘g4! 26 h3 h5, reaching a complex position typical of Topalov: the weakness of the white king compensates for the piece.

14...♗e7!

The idea of 14 ♖a3 would become apparent if Black carelessly played 14...f5?!; there would follow 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♔e5 18 f4 ♔g7 19 ♘b5 ♞h8 20 ♖g3, and a

white rook has made it to the kingside much more quickly than in the previous examples we have seen.

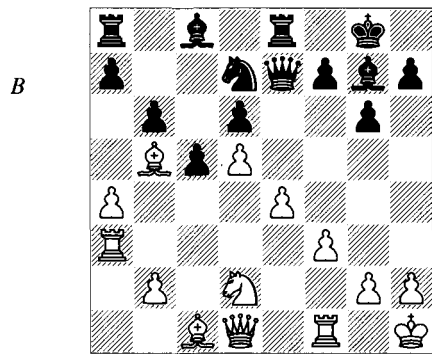
With the text-move, Black puts pressure on the e-file and overprotects d6, winning more freedom against ♘c4.

15 ♘b5

Against 15 ♘c4, Black plays 15...♔a6, with equality according to Kramnik since d6 is protected.

15...♘b5 16 ♔xb5 (D)

Retaking with the pawn in this case doesn't create any trouble for the defence of a7: if 16 axb5, there can follow 16...f5.



16...♖d8

Kramnik suggests the other unpin, 16...♖f8, strengthening an eventual ...f5. The text-move makes a future e5 more difficult due to the pressure against d5.

17 a5 a6

Black is not afraid of worsening his structure, because it also entails the opening of files on the queenside. The alternative was 17...♖b8.

18 ♔c6

The bishop is placed on an active position, and this was one idea of 15 ♘b5, although it might also end up out of play. 18 axb6 ♘xb6 19 ♔d3 was worth considering. Instead, 18 ♔xd7?! ♔xd7 19 axb6 is a poor idea, since Black regains the pawn and gets activity after 19...♔b5 20 ♔e1 ♖ab8.

18...♖b8 19 axb6 ♘xb6

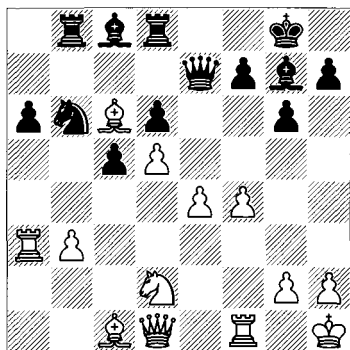
Kramnik suggests the exchange sacrifice 19...♘e5!? 20 b7 ♔xb7 21 ♔xb7 ♗xb7 22 f4 ♘d7 23 ♘c4 ♘f6 24 ♘a5 ♗b5 25 ♘c6 ♘xe4, with good compensation.

20 b3 ♖e5

With the idea of ...♞h4, provoking f4. Another idea is 20...♘d7; after 21 ♖c4 ♘e5, 22 ♘a5 would be risky in view of the accumulation of pieces on the kingside after 22...♞h4 and it is not clear whether the c6-bishop and the a5-knight are relevant on the queenside.

21 f4 ♖g7 (D)

W

**22 f5!**

Necessary: provoking f4 would be justified in the event of 22 ♞c2 due to 22...f5!.

22...♘d7 23 ♖xd7!

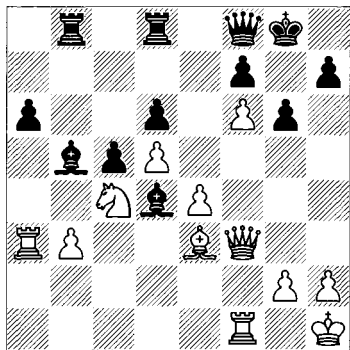
Stopping the black knight from settling on e5.

23...♖xd7 24 ♞f3 ♖d4 25 f6

The safety of the black king is now compromised, although there are adequate resources.

25...♞f8 26 ♖c4 ♖b5 27 ♖e3 (D)

B

**27...♖xe3?!**

This exchange was not forced. It was possible to keep the tension with 27...♞e8!, putting pressure on e4: if 28 ♖xd4 cxd4 29 ♞d3 there would follow 29...♞h6 30 ♞xd4 ♞h4.

28 ♞xe3 h5

With this manoeuvre Black tries to control h6 in order to neutralize White's threat of infiltration, and also to be able to play ...♞h6.

29 h4 ♖h7 30 ♞fa1 ♖xc4 31 bxc4 ♞b4 32 ♞c3 ♞e8

Putting pressure on e4 and preventing the break e5.

33 ♞xa6?

This surrender of the back rank is mistaken. Kramnik points out that 33 ♖h2 ♞b6 34 ♞ca3 was to be preferred.

33...♞b1+ 34 ♖h2 ♞f1

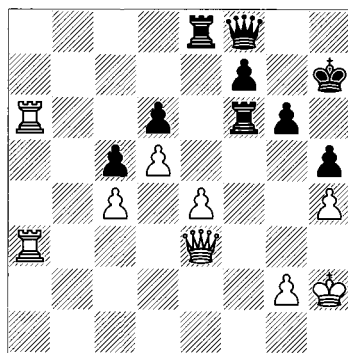
White has no satisfactory way to protect the f6-pawn.

35 ♞ca3

If 35 ♞b3, with the idea of meeting 35...♞xf6 with 36 e5!, there follows 35...♞e5!.

35...♞xf6 (D)

W

**36 e5!**

Before Black can blockade with ...♞e5.

36...♞f5

36...♞xe5? loses to 37 ♞xe5 dxe5 38 ♞xf6, with a quick attack on f7.

37 e6

Achieving enough counterplay to draw by exposing the black king. 37 ♞xd6? ♞xe5 38 ♞xc5 is not possible because the white king ends up in a mating-net after 38...♞e7! and 39...♞e1.

37...fxe6 38 ♞a7+ ♖g8 39 ♞g3 ♞f6

Black's queen must prevent White's from getting to g5. If 39...♞f6?, there follows 40 ♞g5 (threatening ♞f3) 40...♖h8 41 ♞a8!, and the black position becomes critical.

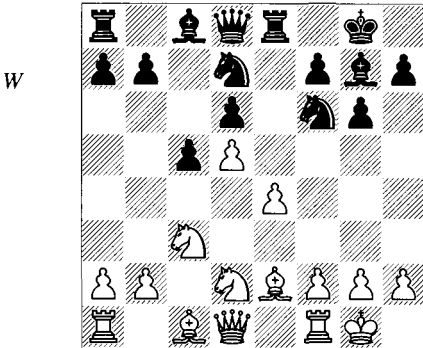
Now the game ends in a draw.

40 ♞a8! ♞xa8 41 ♞xa8+ ♖g7 42 ♞a7+ ♖g8 1/2-1/2

Game 3 [A77]

Boris Gelfand – Jesper Hall*Malmö 1999*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♖f3 g6 7 e4 ♙g7 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♜e8 10
♜d2 ♜bd7 (D)

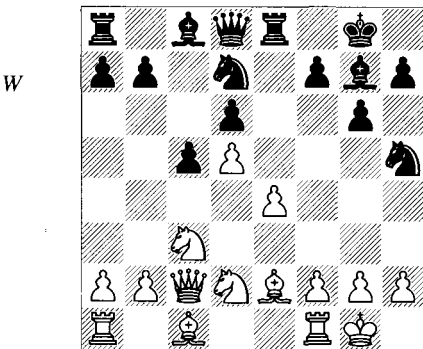


This line was highly popular in the 1970s and 1980s, due significantly to the spectacular win by Fischer over Spassky at Reykjavik 1972.

11 a4

White has several moves and move-orders at his disposal, such as 11 h3, 11 ♜e1, 11 ♜c2 and 11 f4, transposing to a line of the Four Pawns Attack (see Game 16).

After 11 ♜c2 in Spassky-Fischer, World Ch (3), Reykjavik 1972, Black apparently broke all the rules by allowing the doubling of his pawns on the h-file with 11...♜h5!? (D).



There followed 12 ♙xh5 gxh5 13 ♖c4, and Black justified his idea by becoming active on

the kingside: 13...♜e5 14 ♜e3 ♜h4 15 ♙d2 ♜g4 16 ♜xg4 hxg4 17 ♙f4 ♜f6, and Black had undoubled his pawns with a good game. An imprecision by White, 18 g3? (18 ♙g3 is better, planning f3), was enough for Black to seize the initiative with 18...♙d7, intending ...b5. There followed 19 a4 b6 (without rushing, and better than 19...a6, which allows 20 a5) 20 ♜fe1 a6 21 ♜e2 b5! 22 ♜ae1 ♜g6 23 b3 ♜e7, achieving a good game on the queenside, with a strong pressure against e4.

The amazing ...♜h5 is an idea worth considering, although White has refined the move-order to thwart it.

11 h3 is an important alternative, with a different idea in mind. White prevents 11...♜e5 due to 12 f4. Black sometimes replies with 11...g5, intending 12...♜e5, but he must then be ready to meet the pawn sacrifice 12 ♖c4!. Other possibilities are 11...♜b6 and 11...h6. These variations are analysed in Watson's book, *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*.

11...♜e5

The move ...a6 can be postponed. However, if Black wants to transfer pieces to the kingside, it is necessary to play it at some point to prevent ♜b5, and also an eventual ♙b5 by White, going after an exchange of the light-squared bishops, especially when ...g5 has been played. Nevertheless let's not forget that it weakens the b6-square.

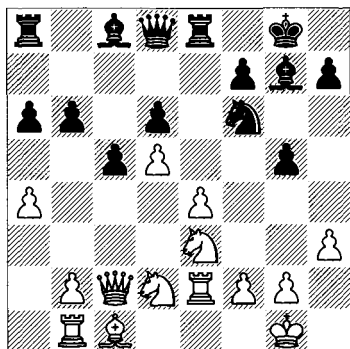
With the text-move, Black centralizes his knight without fearing 12 f4? due to 12...♜eg4, when White's position is wobbly: if 13 ♖c4, there follows 13...♜xe4! 14 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 15 ♜xg4 ♙d4+, winning back the piece.

But let's take a look at some instructive examples following 11...a6:

a) Here is a case where Black was successful: 12 ♜c2 ♜e5 13 ♜d1?! (threatening f4, by controlling e3, but this is very passive; 13 f4 is not convincing either, given that Black carries out the thematic manoeuvre 13...♜eg4; e.g., 14

♖c4 ♜xe4! 15 ♜xe4 ♙d4+ 16 ♜h1 ♜xh2!) 13...g5! (this is a basic idea to support the centralization of the e5-knight; the drawback is that it weakens f5, but for the time being this is not worrying) 14 h3 ♜g6 (Black chooses to go hunting the light-squared bishop) 15 ♜e3 ♜f4 16 ♜e1 (if 16 ♙f3, there follows 16...h5!) 16...♜xe2+ 17 ♜xe2 b6 18 ♜b1 (*D*).

B

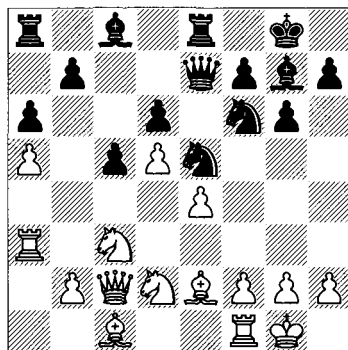


18...♜a7! (we must familiarize ourselves with this manoeuvre to attack the e4-pawn) 19 b3?! ♜ae7 20 f3 (now it is time to go for the break ...f5) 20...♜h5! 21 ♙b2 ♙d4! 22 ♜h2 (after 22 ♙xd4 cxd4 23 ♜g4, there can follow 23...f5 24 ♜f2 ♜f4 25 ♜e1 g4) 22...f5 23 ♜c4 ♙xb2 24 ♜xb2 ♜e5 25 ♜f2 g4! and Black has achieved an ideal position, Najdorf-Pilnik, Buenos Aires 1973.

b) Let's see another, more modern, example: 12 ♜a3 ♜e5 13 ♜c2 ♜e7 (Black doesn't want to commit to playing ...g5 yet and stops f4 indirectly by putting pressure on the e4-pawn) 14 a5 (*D*) (White doesn't contemplate f4 as the first possibility: he instead prepares to play on the queenside, exploiting the weakness of b6; if 14 h3, threatening f4, 14...g5 is now almost forced).

14...♙g4 (Black tries either to exchange a piece to gain more mobility, or to provoke f3, so that he would have the manoeuvre ...♜h5; instead, 14...♜b8 is more usual) 15 ♙xg4 ♜fxg4 16 ♜a4 (heading for b6) 16...♜d7 17 ♜d1! (to drive the g4-knight away and continue with f3 and ♜c4, or alternatively to force a weakening of the black structure) 17...f5 18 exf5 gxf5 19 h3 ♜ge5 20 f4 (White has made a lot of progress on the queenside, and the black structure is

B

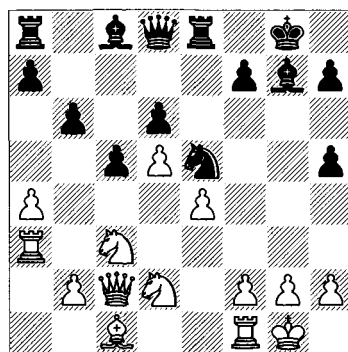


weak, but Black has also won the e4-square) 20...♜f7 21 ♜f3 ♜f6 22 ♜b3 ♜ab8 23 ♜b6 (Beliavsky-Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2006), and here Black should play 23...♜xb6 24 ♜xb6 ♜e4, with just a slight advantage to White after 25 ♙d2 ♜h6 26 b4.

12 ♜c2

Let's see an example where the idea ...♜h5 suffered a severe blow: 12 ♜a3 (this move, which we saw in line 'b' of the previous note, is useful for several reasons; like there, White can play on the queenside with ♜b3, exploiting the weakness of b6, and indirectly the one on d6, but he can also go to the kingside) 12...b6 (continuing with the idea of ...♜h5; the main alternative is 12...g5) 13 ♜c2 ♜h5 14 ♙xh5 gxh5 (*D*).

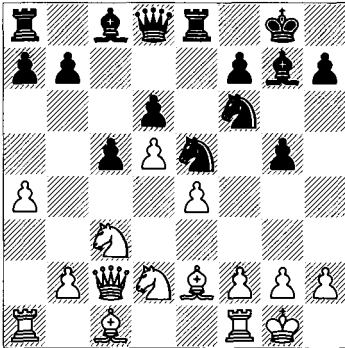
W



15 ♙d1! ♙a6 16 ♜h3! (this exchange sacrifice to exploit the weaknesses of Black's castled position was prepared with the previous moves) 16...♙xf1 17 ♜xf1 b5 18 ♜de3! bxa4 19 ♜f5 (reaching an ideal position) 19...♜g6 20 ♜xh5 ♙e5 21 g3 ♜b8 22 ♜le3, with more than enough compensation, Petrosian-Rashkovsky, USSR Ch, Moscow 1976.

12...g5 (D)

W



This is a fundamental idea in the position: Black bolsters the e5-knight at the expense of weakening f5, trying to play on the kingside. The main idea is to break with ...f5, prepared with ...g6, ...gfg4, or ...g4 followed by ...h5.

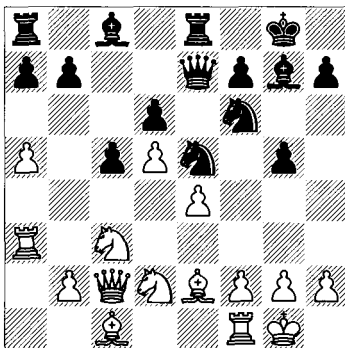
13 ♖a3 ♚e7

Black doesn't reveal his intentions and puts indirect pressure on e4. Black has some more radical alternatives in the form of 13...g6, 13...gfg4 and 13...g4. In the last case against 14 dxc4 the soundest is 14...dxc4 15 ♗xc4, and now 15...d7, followed by ...d5 and perhaps ...h4 or ...f5. 14...h5 has also been played, planning ...f5, with ...g7 if necessary.

14 a5 (D)

Against 14 ♖e1 Black has a typical manoeuvre, 14...gfg4, preparing ...f5. After 15 d1 g6 16 ♚d1, there follows 16...h6, and ...f5 is imminent. Black achieved good play after 17 g3 a6 18 ♗e3 f5 19 exf5 dxf5 20 dxf5 ♗xf5 21 ♚d2 h6 22 ♖a1 ♚f6 23 ♗d3 d5 in Najdorf-Timman, Bugojno 1982.

B

**14...h6**

This solid move doesn't allow the manoeuvre ...dfg4-h6. Gelfand points out the alternative 14...g4, when after 15 f4! gxf3 16 dxf3 dxf3+ 17 ♗xf3 d4 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗f4, the game is complex, both sides having weaknesses.

15 d1 ♗d7 16 d3

The original idea was 16 d3, but Black gets counterplay with 16...d6 17 ♗d3 d4. Here the black queen's pressure on e4 is felt.

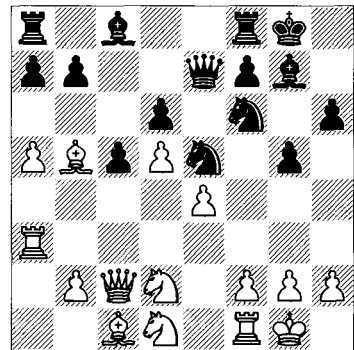
16...f8

A useful move, supporting ...f5, while preventing the exchange of the defender of the light squares with ♗b5.

17 ♗b5 ♗c8 18 d1 (D)

This position could also have been reached via 15 ♗b5 ♖f8 16 d1.

B

**18...h5**

Gelfand points out the following manoeuvre to solve his weakness on f5: 18...d8! 19 d3 d4 20 d4xg4 ♗xg4 21 h3 d4c7, with counterplay. 22 hxg4 allows the c7-knight to reach d4, whereas other retreats by the b5-bishop permit Black to place the g4-bishop on d7, without obstructing his development. If 22 ♗a4, there follows 22...d2.

19 d3 a6?!

Seriously weakening b6, and leading to a passive position. Gelfand points out that it was better to play 19...d4 20 ♖e1 d4g4 21 d4dc4 d4f6, with a complex position: the white pieces are crowded and Black's defence is based on the fact that the break 22 e5 is not to White's advantage after 22...dxe5 23 d6 ♚e6 24 a6 b6. Note that in this line Black cannot carry out 'his' break ...f5 with 21...dxe3 22 ♗xe3 f5?!,

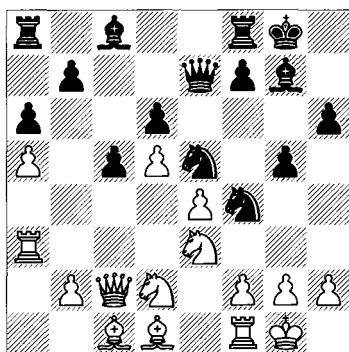
due to 23 e5!, and the black position crumbles: if 23...xe5, there follows 24 xc5, whereas 23...dxe5 is met with 24 xf4 gxf4 25 d6.

20 e2

The atypical retreat 20 a4! f6 21 e1, intending df1-g3, heading for f5, is interesting.

20...f4 21 d1 (D)

B



Planning e1, followed by df1-g3, invading f5 – it is also possible to play eventually g3 and f4.

21...f5?

Black won't be able to retake on f5, and the weakness thus created in his castled position will be serious. He could have prepared it by 21...d7!, with a reasonable position after 22 dxc4 dxc4 23 dxc4 f5 24 xf4 gxf4 25 b6 fxe4 26 xd7 (Black's compensation after 26 dxa8?! xa8 is excellent, with his strong pawn-centre) 26...xd7 27 xe4.

22 exf5!

Less clear is 22 xf5 xf5 23 exf5 dxd5 24 b3 bf7 25 h5 xh5 26 xd5+ bf7, when Black cannot complain.

22...bf7 23 e4 d8 (D)

23...xf5 is not possible due to 24 xf5 xf5 25 xf4 xf4 26 xd6, winning a pawn.

24 g4!

White is content to give back the pawn, but in return for attacking the kingside.

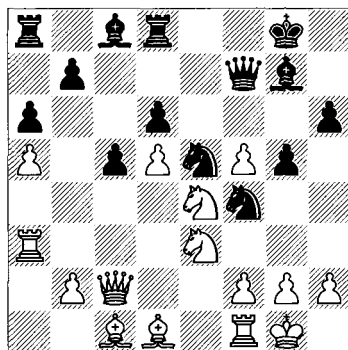
24...xd5 25 d5 xd5 26 h4!

The a3-rook will be vital in the attack that follows.

26...b5

Looking for practical counterchances on the long diagonal, but Black's castled position will be further weakened. If 26...gxh4, there follows

W



27 xh6, whereas 26...e8 27 hxg5 dxc4 28 g3 e5 29 f6, among others, is demolishing.

27 hxg5 hxg5

If 27...b7, then simply 28 e1.

28 xg5 b7

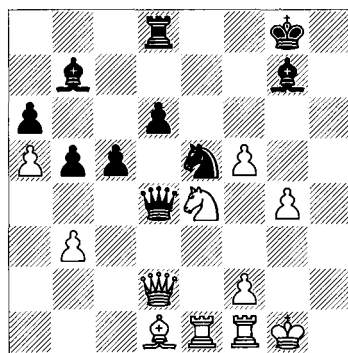
Giving up the exchange to lessen the strength of the attack. If 28...e8, there are several advantageous continuations, such as the materialistic 29 f3, followed by 30 f6, f4 and g5, etc., and it is also possible to continue the attack with 29 e3.

29 d8 xd8 30 e3 c4 31 eel

Slowly White regroups, holding back Black's temporary initiative, while the material advantage and the weakness of the black king persist.

31...d4 32 b3 d5 33 d2 (D)

B



33...d3

The endgame after 33...xd2 34 dxd2 h6 is sad; e.g., 35 f4 d3 36 e7, etc. Now White returns material to finish off the game with an attack.

34 g5! d7 35 f3! xe1 36 xe1 xe4

The pawn-storm against the castled king is decisive after 36...e5 37 g6; e.g., 37...f7

38 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 39 ♜g5+ ♜f6 40 ♜h7+ ♜f7
41 ♜xe5 ♜xf3 42 ♜e6 ♜xg4 43 ♜g5+.

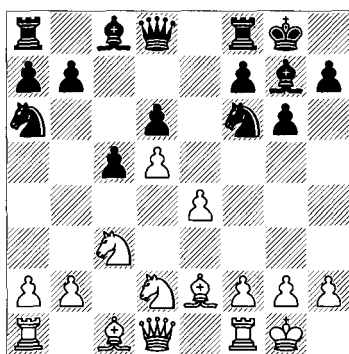
37 ♜xe4 ♜a1+ 38 ♜g2 ♜f6 39 ♜h5 ♜d8 40
♜e6 ♜f7 41 ♜g5 ♜d7 42 ♜d5 1-0

Game 4 [A73]

Peter Leko – Vladimir Kramnik

World Ch match (game 13), Brissago 2004

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♜c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♜f3 g6 7 ♜d2 ♜g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♜e2 ♜a6 10
0-0 (D)



This position is different from the lines covered in the previous two games, because White has played ♜d2 voluntarily, rather than in response to ...♜e8. Black need not agree to transpose back to standard lines, and in this game we investigate a noteworthy alternative plan for him.

10...♜e8

Black tries to open the game with ...f5 as soon as possible, exploiting the fact that the e5 break is not immediately available. 11 f4, preparing e5, is not to be feared due precisely to 11...f5.

11 ♜c4

The natural move, although White has also tried 11 ♜e1, keeping the option in some lines of playing ♜de4. Then:

a) 11...f5 12 exf5 ♜xf5 13 ♜de4 illustrates that comment, although Black's position looks sound after 13...♜ac7 14 a4 ♜f6 15 ♜g3 ♜d7 followed by ...a6.

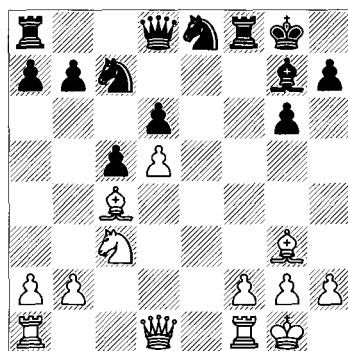
b) 11...♜ac7 12 f4 (White insists on the e5 break) 12...f5 13 ♜f3 ♜d4+ 14 ♜h1 ♜f6 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♜b3 ♜g4 17 ♜xg4 ♜xc3 18 bxc3

fxg4 19 c4 and after 19...♜f5?! 20 ♜b2 ♜d7 21 ♜d2 h6 22 ♜c3, the line-up on the long diagonal was something for Black to worry about in Pelletier-Bauer, Biel 2005. Instead, it is interesting to counterattack against the white centre with 19...b5!?, isolating the d5-pawn, and giving life to the c8-bishop; e.g., 20 cxb5 ♜h4! (threatening ...g3, to provoke a weakening of the light squares) 21 g3 ♜f6, followed by ...♜f5 and ...♜b7, or ...♜f5, depending on what White does. In the tactical duel after 20 ♜b2 bxc4 21 ♜xc5 dxc5 22 d6 ♜f7 Black seems to hold his own.

11...♜ac7

11...f5 at once is possible, keeping the option of playing ...♜b4, which would hinder a hasty a4 by White. Lugovoi-Vera, Montreal 2003 continued 12 exf5 ♜xf5 13 ♜f4, and here Black carried out the usual exchange of his light-squared bishop, to ease the pressure on d6, with 13...♜d3. There followed 14 ♜g3 ♜xc4 15 ♜xc4 ♜ac7 (D).

W



Here the standard reply is 16 a4, which we shall see later on (specifically, the game Novikov-M.Gurevich in the note to Black's 13th move). In the game White tried to put the black centre under pressure with 16 ♜e4!?, allowing

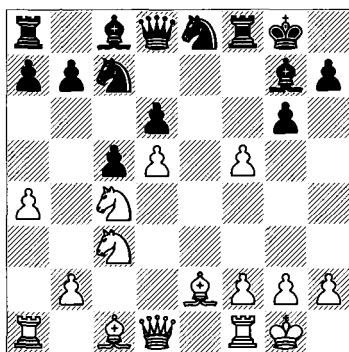
16...b5. After 17 ♖e2 ♜b8 18 ♜b1 ♘f6 19 ♙h4! ♘cxd5 White could have exerted unpleasant pressure with a variation given in *NiC Yearbook 74*: 20 ♙g3! ♜b6 21 a4! a6 22 a5 ♜b7 23 ♙f3 ♜d7 24 ♘g5.

With the text-move (11...♘ac7), Kramnik rules out this possibility.

12 a4 f5 13 exf5 (D)

The move 13 ♙f4, provoking 13...g5 and ...f4 – which is not worrying because the black knights are far away – is a temporary pawn sacrifice. Gyimesi-Chatalbashev, Bled open 2002 continued 13...fxe4 14 ♜d2 ♜f6 15 ♙g5 ♜f7 16 ♜ad1 (here or on the following move the active pawn sacrifice with f3 is interesting) 16...♙f5 17 g4?! (this move is open to question, due to the weakness of the white king; 17 f3 is better) 17...♙d7 18 ♘xe4 ♙xa4 19 ♘cxd6 ♘xd6 20 ♘xd6 ♜d7 21 ♜a1?! ♜xd6 22 ♜xa4 ♙d4, with a better game for Black – the d5-pawn is weak, and the black majority on the queenside is more dangerous than White's on the kingside.

B



13...♜xf5

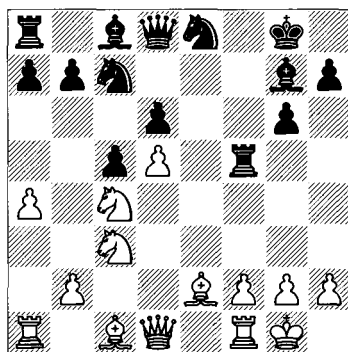
13...♜xf5 is more usual. If now White makes inconsequential moves like 14 ♙e3, 14 ♙f3 or 14 ♜a3, Black can improve the position of his c7-knight with 14...♘a6, followed by ...♘b4, so as later on to push with ...b5 with the unpleasant presence of the b4-knight controlling c2 and d3, and hitting the isolated d5-pawn.

That's why the more incisive 14 ♙f4 is played. Now there can also follow 14...♘a6, but with the f4-bishop and the c4-knight, the pressure on d6 is annoying. Instead the capture of the d5-pawn, parting with the g7-bishop, by

means of 14...♙xc3 15 bxc3 ♙e4 gives clear compensation to White after 16 ♙g3 ♙xd5 17 ♜d2 – the black pieces are very passive. It is considered best for Black to get rid of the c4-knight, or of the f4-bishop, with the familiar manoeuvre 14...♙d3 15 ♙g3 ♙xc4 16 ♙xc4 ♘f6. Now in the case of 17 ♜d3 ♘h5 18 ♜ae1 ♘h8 19 b3 a6 20 ♘e4 ♘g3 21 ♜xg3 b5 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♙d3 ♘xd5 24 ♜xd6 (Novikov-M.Gurevich, Lvov 1987), Black can create a passed pawn by 24...c4!? 25 bxc4 ♘f4. Having seen this example, we can appreciate why White might want to prevent ...♘h5 with 17 ♙e2. Black can then prepare the ...b5 break with 17...a6, followed by ...♜b8, or with 17...♜e8, threatening ...♘e4, and only then ...a6.

We return to 13...♜xf5 (D):

W



14 ♙g4

13...♜xf5 prevented 14 ♙f4, but not the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

14...♜f8 15 ♙xc3

The exchange is in principle favourable to White, who keeps his c4-knight, but as we shall see it is not something conclusive. Kramnik suggested 15 ♙f3 b6 “with a complex game” – the f3-bishop overprotects d5 against the imminent harassment with ...♙b7, although ...b6 also allows the manoeuvre ...♙a6 followed by ...♙xc4.

In Sriram-Cebalo, Biel 2005, White kept the light-squared bishops. There followed 15 ♙e3 b6 16 ♙e2 ♙b7 17 ♜d2 ♜d7 18 h3, and Black didn't accept the pawn. The dark-squared bishop is almost always missed in the Modern Benoni, although here there is compensation – Black's position seems to be playable after 18...♙xc3

19 bxc3 ♖xd5, since there are no mobility problems nor serious weaknesses.

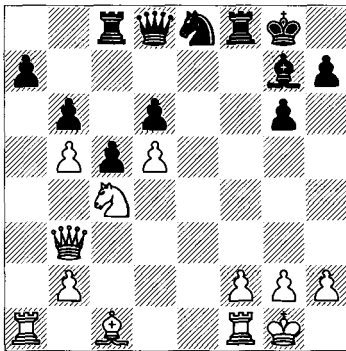
15...♖xc8 16 ♖b3

Kramnik suggested 16 ♖e4, with the intention 16...♖f5 17 ♖e3. The idea of inserting 16...♖h4 is interesting, and now after 17 ♖e2, 17...♖f5 prevents ♖e3. White can give up his d5-pawn in several ways, for definite compensation. Instead, leaving the knight out of play by 17 ♖cxd6? is unsatisfactory: 17...♖xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♖cd8 19 ♖xb7 ♖xd5, followed by ...♖b8.

16...b6 17 ♖b5

Kramnik criticized this exchange and suggested 17 ♖e4 instead.

17...♖xb5 18 axb5 (D)



18...♖c7!

The most economic way of defending a7: the rook is heading for f7, attacking f2.

19 ♖d2

The strong g7-bishop must be neutralized.

19...♖cf7 20 ♖c3 ♖d7

In case of 20...♖f6, Black's activity would end after 21 ♖e3 ♖e4 22 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 23 f3, as pointed out by Kramnik, who also proposes the more active 20...♖h4. Now after 21 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22 f3 there is 22...♖f5!.

21 f3 (D)

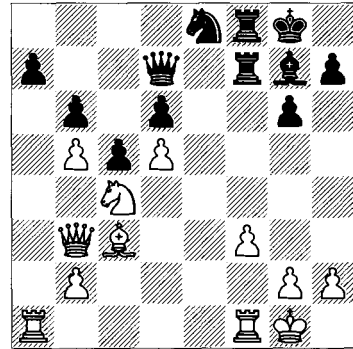
21...g5!?

Kramnik was keen to play for a win in this, the penultimate game of the match, in order to level the score. Therefore he takes risks by trying for the break ...g4.

22 ♖e3 ♖f4 23 ♖fe1 h5 24 ♖c2 ♖f7

24...g4? would be premature due to 25 fxg4 hxg4 26 ♖g6, hampering Black's activity and hitting all his weak points.

B



25 h3 ♖d4 26 ♖xd4 ♖xd4

26...cxd4 27 ♖c4 g4 leads to a more chaotic position.

27 ♖f5

White chooses to enter the endgame. The alternative was to continue in a complex middle-game with 27 b3 ♖g7.

27...♖xf5 28 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 29 ♖xe8+ ♖f7 30 ♖b8 ♖dxd5 31 ♖xa7+ ♖e6 32 ♖e8+ ♖f6 33 g4

Kramnik pointed out 33 ♖h7 as preferable, with a level game.

33...hxg4 34 hxg4 ♖d1+ 35 ♖f2 ♖e5 36 ♖h8

The two black pieces would be better in the event of 36 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 37 ♖g7 ♖f6.

36...♖d2+ 37 ♖g3 ♖ee2 38 ♖f8+?

This leads White into a delicate position. He should start a counterattack by 38 ♖h6+! ♖e5 39 ♖e7+ ♖d5 40 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 41 ♖h5, with a very complex endgame.

38...♖g6 39 ♖g8+ ♖f6 40 ♖f8+ ♖e6 41 ♖e8+ ♖d5 42 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 43 ♖g7 ♖e5!

Now Black has the advantage: his king is active, whereas White's is not. The creation of one or two passed pawns, further advanced than the opponent's, is only a matter of time.

44 ♖b7

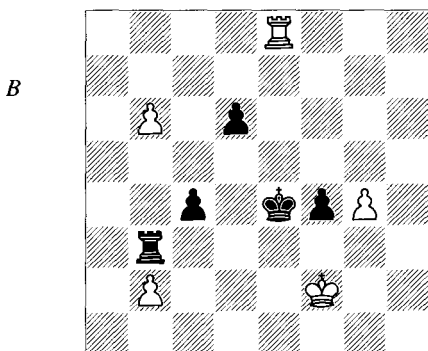
Kramnik points out that after 44 b3 ♖d4 45 ♖g6 d5 46 ♖xb6 ♖e3 47 ♖g6 ♖xb3 48 ♖xg5 c4, Black wins – his pawn is much quicker than White's.

44...c4 45 ♖xb6 ♖e2 46 f4 ♖e3+ 47 ♖f2 gxf4 48 ♖b8 ♖b3

Kramnik analyses this ending in depth in *Informator 91*. It is very instructive to read his conclusions. He suggests that 48...♖g3! is best, although even then the best line for both sides leads to a draw.

The endgame that now follows is so complex that not even the best players in the world were able to solve its complexities at the board.

49 b6 ♖e4 50 ♙e8+? (D)



50...♙d3?

This lets White's mistake go unpunished. 50...♙d4! is correct; for instance, 51 ♙e2 is met

by 51...f3!, which is not possible in the game. After 52 ♙d2+ ♖e4 53 ♙xd6 ♙xb2+ 54 ♖g3 c3 White can't stop Black's passed pawns – the king will soon support them.

51 ♙e2 d5 52 ♖f3 d4 53 g5 c3 54 bxc3 dxc3 55 ♙g2 ♙b2

In case of 55...c2, there follows 56 ♙xc2 ♖xc2+ 57 ♖xf4 and the g5-pawn supported by the king is enough to draw. The same happens after 55...♙xb6 56 ♖xf4 ♙c6 57 g6 c2 58 ♙xc2 ♙xc2 59 ♖f5.

56 b7 ♙xb7 57 ♖xf4 ♙b2 58 ♙g1 c2 59 ♙c1!

The only move, but enough to draw. The game ends with another endgame of rook against pawn with the black king too far from the winning zone.

59...♙b1 60 ♙xc2 ♖xc2 61 g6 ♙d3 62 ♖f5 ♙b5+ 63 ♖f6 ♙b6+ 64 ♖f7 ♙xg6 65 ♖xg6 1/2-1/2

Summary

These four games give us an important panorama of several typical structures of the Modern Benoni, the main struggle being between White's initiative on the kingside and Black's on the queenside.

We saw both sides acting on their 'weaker' flank in Game 1. White's plan of playing on the queenside with the break b4, after a5, is mentioned several times (at moves 17, 22, 23, etc.), whereas in the main game it is Black who seizes the initiative on the kingside.

The manoeuvre ...♙e8-c7 is especially useful when, after ...a6 by Black, White rushes to play a5, as we saw on White's 14th move in Ahlander-Marín, Gothenburg 2000.

The notes to Black's 12th move in Game 2 feature two important cases with the plan b4 by White. In Reshevsky-Ra.García, Buenos Aires 1970, White achieves the ideal position, and after blocking the c4-pawn, manoeuvres his pieces and finally starts pushing his centre and overwhelms Black with the break e5. There also, in Ivanchuk-Manor, European Junior Ch, Groningen 1986/7, an example is shown where Black neutralizes that plan, and counterattacks with the break ...f5.

Finally, within this system the importance of the passed pawn on c4 – which was not important before – is a decisive factor when the blockader is eliminated, as we saw in Beliavsky-Portisch, Szirak Interzonal 1987.

In the notes to White's 11th move in Game 3, we saw Fischer's surprising ...♙h5 idea, allowing doubled h-pawns. He used it successfully against Spassky thanks to his initiative on the kingside. We saw the drawbacks of this idea in Petrosian-Rashkovsky, USSR Ch, Moscow 1976, in the note to White's 12th move, where the weaknesses of the kingside could not be justified.

On Black's 11th move, we witnessed in Najdorf-Pilnik, Buenos Aires 1973 the rook manoeuvre along Black's second rank by ...♙a7-e7 to put pressure on the e-file. We shall see many more times.

The rook-lift is a common theme for White, and it featured in Games 2 and 3. White's queen's rook can often be transferred to the kingside along the third rank with aggressive intentions, going to g3 or h3, or it can put pressure on Black's queenside from b3.

In Game 4 the duel of weaknesses between a7 and b5 after 17...♙xb5 18 axb5 was satisfactory for Black, who regrouped without problems by 18...♙c7!.

2 Modern Variation

The Modern Variation is characterized by White playing the moves e4, h3, ♖f3 and ♗d3. The move h3 prevents Black from pinning with ...♗g4, and the bishop on d3 securely defends the e4-pawn, so it is not so easy for Black to disrupt this set-up by normal means. The move h3 is obviously a little slow, and initially it was presumed that the standard tactical blow ...b5 would solve Black's problems. However, once White realized that this thematic sacrifice was not a refutation, and that it didn't promise easy equality either, the line became fashionable.

With his f3-knight 'secured' White doesn't want to play ♖d2-c4, and plans ♗f4, ♖e1, etc., seeking the break e5. The usefulness of h3, in addition to ruling out ...♗g4 and ...♖g4, is that it allows the retreat ♗h2 in the event of the f4-bishop being attacked.

Game 5 analyses the standard 'Modern' position resulting from 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 (or 6 ♖f3 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 e4, which is a common alternative move-order) 6...g6 7 ♖f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3. Black plays solidly and proves that it is not easy to break his position.

In the next two games we examine Black's ways to avoid the standard position. As mentioned above, White has several main routes to reach the 'Modern' set-up, and in some cases Black has a way to frustrate his intentions. **Game 6** features 6 ♖f3 g6 7 h3 intending 8 e4, and Black replies 7...a6 8 a4 ♖e7, preventing e4. This leads to positions of a very different character, in which White cannot expand so rapidly, but can also argue that the black queen is misplaced.

The move-order 6 e4 g6 7 ♖f3 appears in **Game 7**, which Black meets with 7...a6, intending after 8 a4 to play 8...♗g4, reaching a type of position akin to Game 1, which White is seeking to avoid. After 8 h3 b5, as played in the game, Black speeds up his advance on the queenside, while White seeks to show that his central preponderance is of greater weight and that Black's queenside advance does not sweep away all in its path – indeed in the main game we see White playing on the queenside himself.

Game 5 [A70]

Alexander Onishchuk – Hikaru Nakamura

USA Ch, San Diego 2006

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 ♖f3 0-0 9 ♗d3 a6

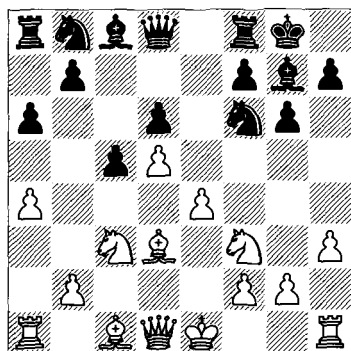
"Every time they don't play 9...b5 I get happy" said Atalik about this position. 9...b5 is the thematic move, but if White so wishes, he can reach an endgame by force with an extra pawn, which according to the latest examples, and Grivas's recent book *Beating the Fianchetto Defences*, is unpleasant for Black to defend. We

shall not be examining it here, since the assessments depend critically on detailed analysis, and less so on general assessments and themes.

Another important idea is the provocative 9...♖h5, preventing ♗f4 by White, profusely analysed in Watson's book *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*. 9...♖e8 10 0-0 c4, as well as the less popular continuations 9...♗d7, and 9...♖a6 are employed too.

10 a4 (D)

B



Once his expansion with ...b5 is stopped, Black accepts that he will have a slightly passive game to start with and hopes to develop all his forces, awaiting further developments by White, trusting the solidity of his position and keeping in reserve the possibility of breaking with ...b5, as well as ...f5.

10...♖bd7 11 0-0 ♖e8

It is still possible to enter the line recommended by Watson, by playing 11...♗h5.

12 ♖e1

The most important alternative is 12 ♖f4, which can transpose to our main line after 12...♗c7 (if White replies 13 ♖e1). There is an independent line, namely the thematic move 13 ♗d2. The knight is heading for c4, besides clearing the way for the f2-pawn. Beliavsky-Petkevich, Warsaw 2004 continued 13...♗h5 (to combat White's intention of 14 ♗c4, which would force 14...♖f8; the alternative for Black is 13...♗e5) 14 ♖h2 ♖d4 15 ♗h1 ♗g7 (Black tries to stop White's expansion on the kingside with a timely ...f5) 16 ♗c2 (after 16 a5 b5 17 axb6 ♗xb6, Black has gained useful space on the queenside; the natural 16 ♗c4 is interesting: after 16...♗e5 17 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18 f4 ♖d4, White can play 19 f5!? in good circumstances; if 19 ♗f3, there would follow one of the ideas of the black manoeuvre, 19...f5) 16...♗e5 17 ♖e2 f5 18 f4 ♗f7 19 ♖f3 fxe4 (in order to obtain the f5-square; if 19...♖d7, there could follow 20 g4!?) 20 ♗cxe4 ♗f5 21 ♖ae1 ♖d7. Black's position is satisfactory: the d4-bishop controls the dark squares and covers the weaknesses of the castled position.

12...♗c7

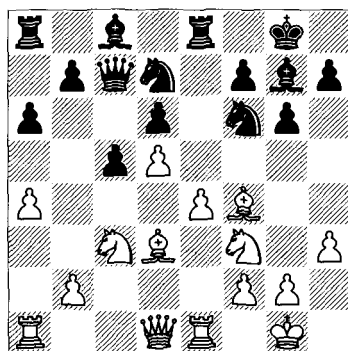
Black can also play 12...♗c7, one of whose ideas is a frequent one in other lines of the Benoni: to make way for the other pieces by 'hiding' the queen on f8. There would also follow 13 ♖f4!, as always with the idea of breaking with e5. 13...♗h5 14 ♖h2 ♗f8 (if 14...♗e5, there follows 15 ♖e2!, which is the usual answer in the line 9...♗h5), and now:

a) 15 g4 ♗hf6 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♖xe5 is hasty due to 18...♖xe5! 19 ♖xe5 ♗xg4, with good compensation for the exchange in the form of a pawn and dark-square control, Estremera-A.Hoffman, Mancha Real 2000.

b) 15 a5! puts Black's position under pressure, as Atalik has demonstrated. There follows 15...♗e5 16 ♖e2! ♗f6 (this retreat shows that something has gone wrong; Atalik indicates that after 16...♗xf3+ 17 ♖xf3 ♗f6 there would follow 18 e5! and if, for instance, 18...dxe5 19 ♖xe5 ♗d7 20 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♗a4, Black is behind in development and lacks coordination, and he also has a serious weakness on c5) 17 ♗xe5 dxe5 (as almost always this structure is bad for Black) 18 ♗c2 ♖d7 19 ♖a3 (making the most of the move 15 a5) 19...♗d6 20 ♖b3 ♗c7 21 ♖b6, Atalik-Lafuente, Mar del Plata 2003.

13 ♖f4 (D)

B



13...b6

Black continues his development. The b7-bishop occupies a passive position, putting pressure on d5 and little more, but it allows the a8-rook to enter the game. Black hopes he will be able to activate his bishop later on.

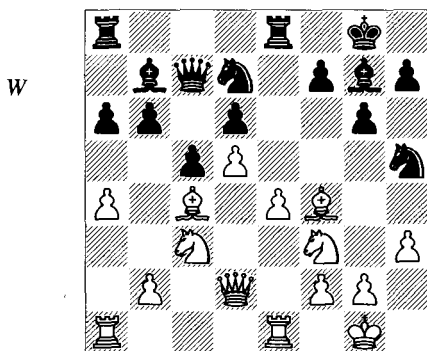
Preparing ...b5 with 13...♖b8 hasn't achieved good results. Karpov-Timman, Candidates (6),

Kuala Lumpur 1990 continued 14 ♖c4! (supporting d5, in order to keep preparing e5, as well as stopping an eventual ...c4 by Black) 14...♟b6 (this move drives away the c4-bishop, but leaves the knight in a bad situation; after 14...♟h5 15 ♖h2 ♟e5, there follows the already familiar 16 ♖e2!, and in the event of 16...♟xf3+ 17 ♖xf3 ♟f6, White has everything ready for 18 e5! dxe5 19 d6, followed by 20 ♖xe5, with advantage, thanks to the strong passed pawn and very active pieces) 15 ♖f1 ♟fd7 16 a5 ♟a8 17 ♟d2 b5 (an interesting pawn sacrifice to seek counterplay, and preventing ♟c4; if 17...♟e5, there would follow 18 ♖g3, threatening f4 and ♟c4) 18 axb6 ♟axb6 19 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 20 ♖xa6 ♟e5 21 ♖e2 c4 22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖e3 ♟b7 24 ♟a4! ♟xa4 25 ♖xa4, and White ended up with a very solid structure, and eventually converted his extra pawn into victory.

14 ♔d2 ♕b7 15 ♕c4

As Karpov points out, the natural 15 ♖ad1 allows 15...c4!, surrendering d4 in exchange for being able to play ...♗c5. The fact that the b7-bishop controls c6 is one of the positive things about the waiting policy. Polak-Akintola, Elista Olympiad 1998 continued 16 ♙c2 ♖ad8 17 ♗d4 ♗c5 18 ♙g5 ♖c8 19 ♗f4 ♗fd7 20 ♙h6, and here Marin's suggestion 20...♙h8! is interesting, leaving e5 for the d7-knight, with a reasonable position.

15...♘h5 (D)



16 ♖h2

Maintaining the annoying pressure on d6. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops is always something to consider. It is worth asking

oneself who gets to control the squares that are left unprotected after 16 ♖h6. In Gundrum-Raimer, ICCF email 2000, Black had no problems after 16...♗xh6 17 ♖xh6 ♕hf6 18 ♕d2 ♗e7 19 ♖e2?, but White could have been more ambitious by playing 19 f4! ♗ae8 20 ♖h4, and the break e5 is hanging over this position. There is no clear continuation to be seen for Black. 16...♖h8! is therefore preferable, in keeping with the waiting policy adopted by Black.

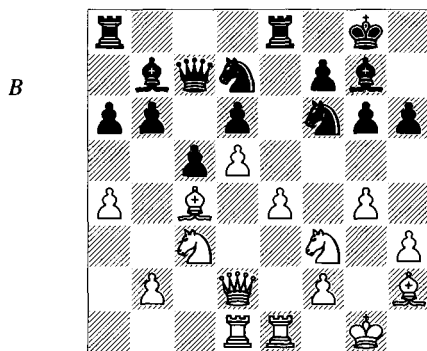
16...h6

Preventing the e5 break with 16...♗e5, even though the dark-squared bishops are exchanged – and therefore without a ‘tall pawn’ remaining on g7 – is not entirely satisfactory. It should be used only as a last resort. In Kazhgaleev-Glicenstein, Issy-les-Moulineaux 2004, the continuation was 17 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18 ♜xe5 dxe5 19 ♖ac1 ♔d6 20 ♙f1 ♜c8 21 ♜b1 ♙d7 22 b3 b5 23 ♗e3 ♖ec8 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖c2 ♖a1 26 ♜c3 ♖xe1 27 ♗xe1, and Black’s queenside pawns became weak, whereas the same cannot be said of the d5-pawn.

17 g4!?

There was no need to compromise the structure; for instance, 17 ♔ad1 could have been played. Of course winning space is not bad, taking into account the passivity of Black's position. However, it does require more attention to tactical details in the future, because the white king's position becomes somewhat 'airy'.

17...♘hf6 18 ♖ad1 (D)



18...h5

This is the negative side of 17 g4: Black gets some counterplay against White's king, but this is not a serious annoyance as yet.

19 g5 ♖h7 20 ♕g3 ♜e7

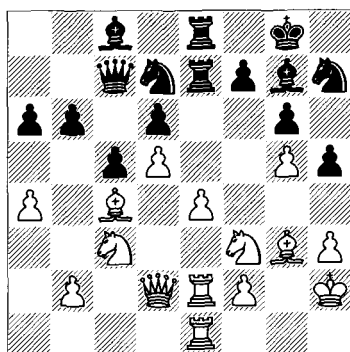
Finding a destination for the a8-rook, namely, to put pressure on the a4-pawn. The drawback is that the a6-pawn becomes weaker.

21 ♜e2 ♜ae8 22 ♜de1 ♕c8

Now White made an error in calculation:

23 ♖h2? (D)

The drawback of Black's plan – which is the already-mentioned a6-pawn – could have been highlighted with 23 ♖d3, as pointed out by Onishchuk himself. Black would then have to give up a pawn, although it is not clear what the best way may be.



23...b5!

All the black pieces wake up, above all the queen, and the weakness of the white king becomes apparent.

24 e5?!

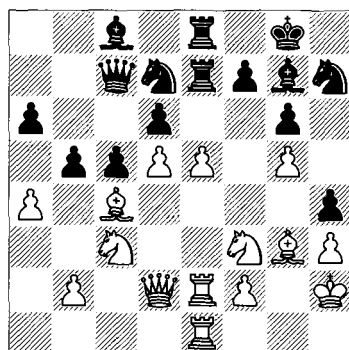
This move might appear strong, but after Black's powerful reply, White will find himself on the brink of defeat.

Onishchuk indicated 24 axb5 as better, although the position is still very complex. For instance, after his main line, 24...♗b6 25 ♕d3 ♖d7 26 ♖g1 c4 27 ♕c2 axb5 28 ♖e3!, there can follow 28...h4!, with the idea of meeting 29 ♕xh4 (if 29 ♕f4 there is time for 29...♖d8, and if 30 ♖xb5?, the difference from the direct 28...♖d8 is that with 30...♖xd5 the f4-bishop is also hit, so Black wins), since d6 isn't attacked, with the regrouping 29...♖b7, followed by 30...♗d7.

24...h4! (D)

This battering-ram near the white king is very strong. The two pieces that can capture it are overloaded.

W



25 ♕f4

If 25 ♕xh4, since d6 is no longer under the bishop's influence, then 25...bxc4 26 exd6 ♖b8, whereas against 25 ♖xh4 the move 25...♖xe5! is quite strong – White must give up material.

25...♖xe5

The coordination of the black pieces has been re-established, and the white king is exposed.

26 ♕xe5 ♖d7

Onishchuk points out that 26...dxe5 would also work, not fearing 27 d6 due to 27...♖d7, and the white king is in even more danger than in the game.

27 ♕xg7 ♖xh3+ 28 ♖g1 ♖g4+ 29 ♖h2 ♖h3+

The position is very complex, and White is struggling to hold the balance. Onishchuk analyses the complications ensuing from 29...♖xf3!? in *Informator 96*.

30 ♖g1 ♕g4

Black is better and hopes to exploit the white king's lack of defence.

31 ♖h2 ♕xe2 32 ♕xe2

After 32 ♕f6? there follows 32...♕f3! 33 ♖xf3 ♖g4+ 34 ♖h2 ♕xe1 35 ♖xe1 bxc4, winning.

32...♕xg7 33 axb5 ♕e5 34 f4

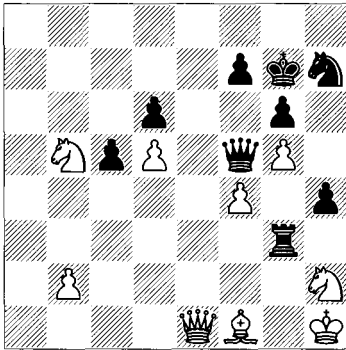
A necessary weakening, and a good move too. If 34 ♖f3?, besides 34...♕f5 pointed out by Onishchuk, there is also 34...♕xe2; for example, 35 ♖xe2 ♖xf3 36 bxa6 ♕e5, with a mating attack.

34...♕e3 35 ♖h1 axb5 36 ♖xb5 ♕g3 37 ♕f1 ♕xe1 38 ♖xe1 ♖f5 (D)

39 ♖d2!

The d5- and f4-pawns are both needed to hold the position. If 39 ♖c7?, there follows

W



39...♖xf4 40 ♖e7 ♘g8!, preventing the threatened ♜e6+ and winning, because the vital g5-pawn falls.

Neither does 39 ♜xd6? hold, because after 39...♖xf4, 40 ♖e7 loses to 40...♖f2, whereas against 40 ♜c4 the move 40...♜xg5 is strong – the white king suffers the attack of a new piece.

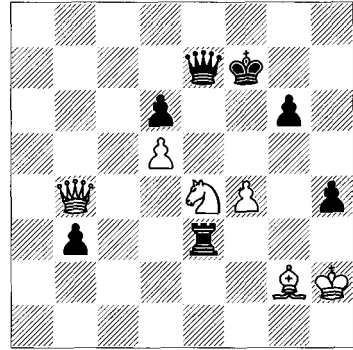
39...♖e4+ 40 ♙g2 ♖b1+ 41 ♙f1 ♖e4+ 42 ♙g2 ♖e7 43 ♜c3 ♜e3 44 ♜g4 ♜e1+ 45 ♜h2 f6 46 gxf6+ ♜xf6 47 ♜xf6

47 ♜e5 is a simpler way to draw, virtually forcing 47...♜xe5 48 fxe5 ♖xe5+ 49 ♙g1 g5 50 ♖e2, because allowing the white pieces to become active after 47...♜a1?! 48 ♜f3 ♜g4+ 49 ♙h3 ♜e3 50 ♜g5 is worse.

In the following tug of war, neither side leaves the 'safety zone', although there are still some risks.

47...♜xf6 48 b4 cxb4 49 ♖d4+ ♜f7 50 ♜e4 b3 51 ♖b4 ♜e3 (D)

W



52 ♜g5+

Onishchuk points out two possibilities for White to go wrong: 52 ♖d4? ♜e2 53 ♜g5+ ♜g8 54 ♖d3 h3!, winning, and 52 ♜xd6+? ♜g8 53 ♖b6 ♜e2, with advantage to Black.

52...♜g8 53 ♜e6 ♜g3 54 ♖b8+ ♜h7 55 ♜g5+ ♜g7 56 ♜e6+ ♜h7 57 ♜g5+ ♜xg5 58 fxg5 ♖e5+ 59 ♙h1 ♖e1+ 60 ♙h2 ♖e5+ 61 ♙h1 b2 62 ♖b7+ ♜g8 63 ♖b8+ ♜f7 64 ♖b7+ ♜e8 65 ♖b8+ ♜e7 1/2-1/2

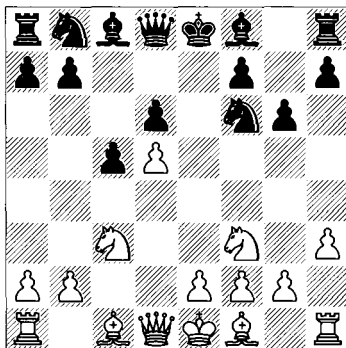
Game 6 [A61]

Michal Krasenkow – Andrei Volokitin

Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♜c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♜f3 g6 7 h3 (D)

B



7...a6

It is not possible to prevent e4 with the move 7...♖e7 since there would follow 8 e4! all the same, for the e4-pawn is untouchable due to 9 ♖a4+. The text-move 'threatens' 8...b5, and after the 'automatic' reply 8 a4, the check on a4 will no longer be on.

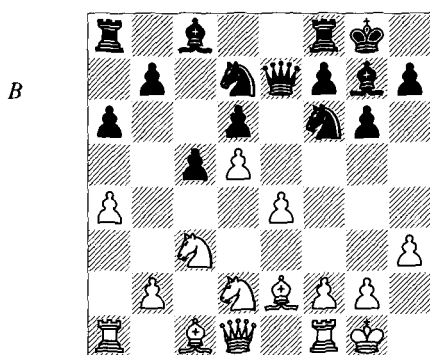
8 a4

Still trying to reach the main position of the line. This move is not forced; another possibility is to play 8 e4, at the cost of allowing Black's expansion on the queenside. As always, there are trade-offs in such a situation, and we shall examine this interesting possibility in Game 7.

8...♖e7 9 ♖g5

9 g3 should be compared with the Fianchetto Variation of Chapter 3.

9 ♘d2 is another idea. Then the mechanical 9...♖g7?! is met by 10 ♘c4 ♘bd7 11 ♖f4, when Black is forced to play 11...♗e5 and re-take with the pawn on e5, blocking the diagonal – as we already know, this is dubious. Better is 9...♘bd7 to answer 10 ♘c4 with 10...♗e5, and after 11 ♘b6 ♖b8 Black will get rid of the b6-knight after completing the development of his kingside. Garcia Ilundain-Magerramov, Nîmes 1991 continued instead 10 e4 ♖g7 11 ♖e2 0-0 12 0-0 (D).

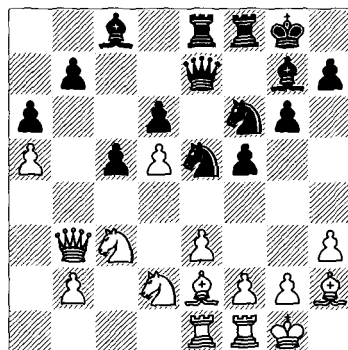


Here Black shouldn't have played 12...♖e7!?, since occupying the e8-square will leave him with problems making progress on the queen-side with his break ...b5. 12...♖b8! 13 ♖e1 ♗e8! is preferable, with the idea of ...♘c7, and later on ...b5. This manoeuvre should be familiar.

In our main game White develops his bishop outside the pawn-chain with 9 ♖g5 before playing e3. With a similar idea, Peng Zhaoqin-de Firmian, Stockholm 2004 continued 9 ♖f4 ♘bd7 10 e3 ♖g7 11 ♘d2 ♗e5 12 ♖e2 0-0 13 0-0 ♘fd7 (with the idea of playing ...f5, placing e4 under control; it is also possible to play like in the previous example, 13...♖b8, in order to prepare ...b5 with ...♗e8-c7) 14 ♖h2 f5 15 ♖c2 ♗f6 16 ♖ae1 ♖d7 17 a5 ♖ae8 18 ♖b3 ♖c8 (D).

With all his pieces in play, Black can be satisfied with his Modern Benoni transformed into a Leningrad Dutch. All his pieces are concentrated on the kingside, and his plan is to open

W

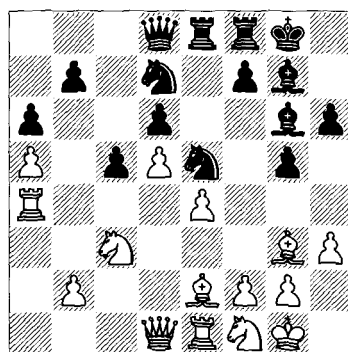


the game on that flank after suitable preparation, such as ...♖h8.

9...♖g7 10 e3 0-0 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 12 ♖d3

White wants to control the b1-h7 diagonal, even if it means conceding Black a tempo. The alternative is 12 ♖e2, when Danailov-Marin, Benasque 2000 continued 12...h6 13 ♖h4 ♗e5 14 0-0 (the prophylactic 14 ♖c2 poses more problems for Black; Black should then try to carry out the break ...b5 or the advance ...f5, both with a quick ...♗e8) 14...g5 15 ♖g3 ♖f5 (having accomplished this development, Black has no serious problems, for all his pieces are coordinated) 16 a5 ♖ae8 17 ♖a4 ♘fd7 18 e4 ♖g6 (now one plan for Black is to play ...f5 at the right time) 19 ♖e1 ♖d8 20 ♘f1 (D).

B



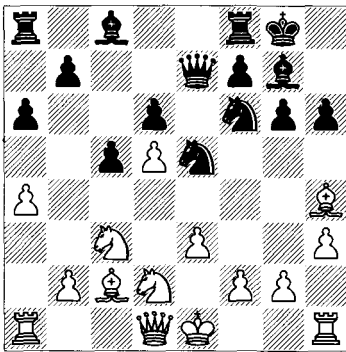
20...c4! (this is a typical plan in the Modern Benoni: Black threatens to invade d3 after ...♘c5, and therefore it is necessary to eliminate this pawn, which in this case Black will get back by capturing on e4) 21 ♗e3 ♘c5 22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖xc4 ♖xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♗xe4 25 ♖b3 ♖e7 26 ♘c4 ♖fe8 27 ♖b6 ♖c7, and Black has all his pieces active with good prospects.

12...♞e5

Another idea is to prepare ...b5 with 12...♞b8. Istratescu-Marin, Romania 2003 continued 13 0-0 h6 14 ♟h4 ♞e5 15 ♟c2 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 f4 ♞ed7?! (this retreat enables Black to play ...b4, but White's initiative in the centre and kingside will be more profitable; Kapengut's suggestions 17...♞c4 and 17...♞d3 both look better) 18 ♞f3 ♞e8 19 e4 ♞f8 (Black has played ...b5, but his pieces are passive) 20 ♞a5! (so that the c3-knight has a good position) 20...b4 21 ♞b5 ♞b6, and here White opted for the break 22 e5, leading to unclear play. It looks better to play 22 ♟b3 first, threatening e5 without giving up any pawns, and against 22...♟b7, to play the familiar advance 23 f5! in good circumstances.

13 ♟c2 h6 14 ♟h4 (D)

B

**14...b5!!**

This surprising pawn offer was a novelty introduced by Volokitin. If before we were looking at a Dutch position, now this is more like a Benko Gambit, admittedly a rather more standard Benoni transformation. Black exploits White's delay in castling, and also the fact that the d5-pawn is poorly defended.

15 axb5 ♟b7 16 b6

White opts to sacrifice a pawn rather than accept it. In the event of 16 bxa6 ♟xa6 the compensation is evident, because of the white king in the centre. Preventing the f6-knight from unpinning with 16 ♟xf6 ♟xf6 17 b6 leaves the black bishop as master of the diagonal, with good play after 17...♞fb8 followed by ...♟c8.

If White starts pushing his centre with 16 f4 ♞ed7 17 e4, this is not for free, for his king is

still in the centre. Krasenkow indicates 17...axb5 18 ♞xa8 ♞xa8 19 ♞xb5 g5! (even better than 19...♞b6 and 19...♞a2) 20 fxg5 ♞xd5 21 ♞g4 h5!.

16...g5 17 ♟g3 ♞xd5 18 ♞xd5 ♟xd5

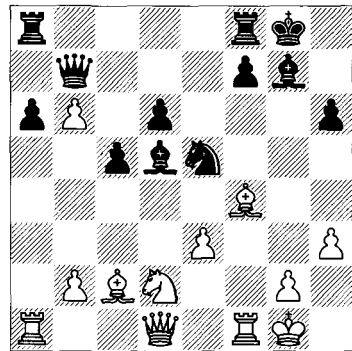
Black has won back his pawn, and the one on b6 is a clear target.

19 0-0 ♞b7 20 f4

White must complicate the game – a quieter course like 20 e4 ♟e6 21 ♟b3 ♟xb3 22 ♞xb3 ♞fb8 cannot be recommended.

20...gxf4 21 ♟xf4 (D)

B

**21...♟xg2**

It is very tempting to destroy the opponent's king's position, but surprisingly this also opens up possibilities for White: the safety of his own king is only slightly compromised, while the bishop is itself endangered, and lines are opened for White to attack the black king.

After the removal of the more dangerous pawn by 21...♞xb6, Krasenkow suggested 22 ♟xe5 dxe5 23 ♞g4 ♞xb2 24 ♞f5 ♞fd8 25 ♞a4, with compensation for the two pawns.

22 ♞f2 ♟xh3

If 22...♟c6, there would follow 23 ♞h5.

23 ♟xe5 dxe5

In case of 23...♟xe5? 24 ♞h5 ♞d7 25 ♞xh6 f6, Black would regret having opened the g-file – 26 ♟h1 is winning.

24 ♞h5 ♞d7?

24...♟e6! is best. Krasenkow points out the complicated line 25 ♞f6! ♞fd8 26 ♞e4, when 26...♞xb6! keeps the game double-edged.

25 ♞a4?

25 ♞e4! is very strong, when Black must play the awful ending ensuing after 25...♞g4+

26 ♖xg4 ♙xg4 27 ♜xc5, since 25...♞ad8 is refuted by 26 ♜f6+! ♙xf6 27 ♖xh6 ♖g4+ 28 ♜h2, winning.

Now the position becomes very difficult to handle.

25...c4 26 ♞xc4 ♞ac8 27 ♙a4 ♖e6? (D)

Black should play 27...♞d3 28 ♖xh3 ♞xc4 29 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 30 ♙g2 ♜h8, when after 31 ♙c2 White has compensation. However, after 31...♖b4, perhaps followed by ...e4, if the white queen moves from h3, a draw is the most likely result, because of the possibility of ...♞e1+ and ...♖h4+.

28 ♙b3!

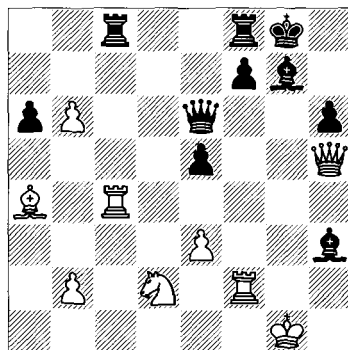
This bishop enters the black position with devastating effect.

28...♜h8

After 28...♞xc4 29 ♙xc4 ♙g4, 30 ♞xf7 wins (as does 30 ♖xf7+); 30...♙xh5 31 ♞xf8+ ♙xf8 32 ♙xe6+ ♜g7 33 ♜e4!, and the underestimated b6-pawn promotes.

29 b7

W



Black cannot hold his position against this powerful enemy.

29...♞xc4 30 ♙xc4 ♖d7

30...♖g4+ is no better: 31 ♖xg4 ♙xg4 32 ♞xf7 ♞b8 33 ♜e4.

31 ♞xf7 ♞xf7 32 ♖xf7

The white king easily escapes from the perpetual.

32...♖g4+ 33 ♜f2 ♖h4+ 34 ♜e2 ♙g4+ 35 ♙d3 e4+ 36 ♜c2 ♖d8 37 ♖f4 1-0

Game 7 [A70]

Anatoly Karpov – Hichem Hamdouchi

Bordeaux rapid (4) 2005

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♜c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♜f3 g6 7 e4 a6

This move-order also aims at preventing the main line, exploiting the fact that White has played an early ♜f3. The idea of 7...a6 is to answer 8 a4 with 8...♙g4, when after 9 ♙e2 ♙g7 10 0-0 0-0, a line of the Classical that we saw in Game 1 is reached.

The immediate 7...♙g4? is answered with 8 ♖a4+!, unpinning; if 8...♜bd7, there follows 9 ♜d2, whereas 8...♙d7 9 ♖b3 costs Black time.

8 h3

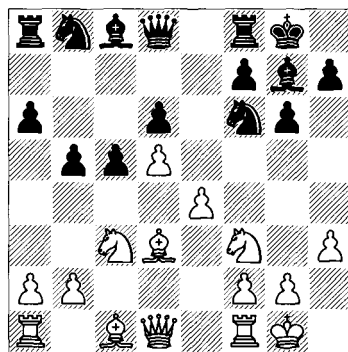
White stops ...♙g4, 'threatening' 9 a4, and then ♙d3. However, this allows Black to set his queenside pawns in motion.

8...b5 9 ♙d3 ♙g7 10 0-0 0-0 (D)

11 a3

The modest appearance of 11 a3 is deceptive. The defensive side is that White prevents the double advance ...c4 and ...b4, which can be

W



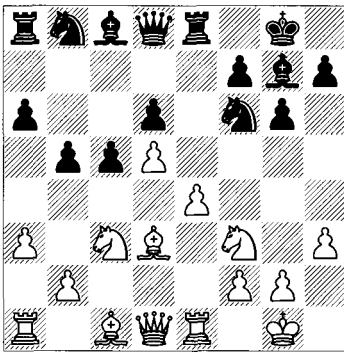
annoying if there is much pressure on e4; and the aggressive side lies in the preparation of the thematic advance b4.

The alternatives are 11 ♙f4 and 11 ♞e1, which generally transpose into similar positions. Let's see an instructive example: Psakhis-Spraggett, Barcelona 1993 continued 11 ♞e1 ♜bd7 (and now a break always to bear in mind) 12 a4

b4 (this move is necessary, conceding the c4-square, but Black has sufficient resources; 12...c4? is wrong, for after 13 ♔f1! Black has problems supporting his pawns, and it also allows the manoeuvre ♜d4-c6) 13 ♜b1 a5! (in general it is best to prevent White from playing a5, which would hinder Black from exchanging off White's future c4-knight) 14 ♜bd2 ♜b6 15 ♜a2 (necessary in order to play b3) 15...♙a6 16 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 17 b3 ♜a7 18 ♙b2 ♜e8?! (Psakhis suggested 18...♜h5 19 ♙xg7 ♜xg7; Black can put pressure on e4, doubling rooks on the e-file, with a reasonable position) 19 ♜a1! ♜c7?! 20 ♜c4! ♜xc4 21 bxc4 ♜h5 22 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 23 ♜ae2, and the black knight ended up badly placed – White can comfortably prepare the break e5.

11...♜e8 12 ♜e1 (D)

B



12...♜a7

This idea is not new in the Modern Benoni: the second rank being clear, Black doubles rooks against the e4-pawn, and will then decide where to place his minor pieces. A potential drawback is that the queenside can end up rather unprotected.

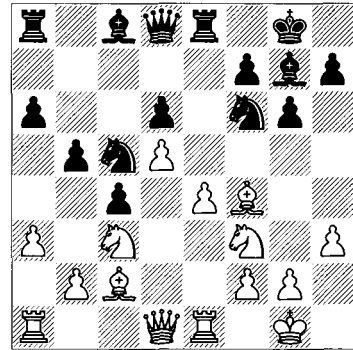
It is possible to continue with 'natural' development, such as 12...♜bd7 13 ♙f4. Then:

a) In Rustemov-Wedberg, Stockholm 2001 the continuation was 13...♜b6 14 ♜d2 ♙b7 (this bishop is passive but by putting d5 under pressure, Black makes the break e5 more difficult to achieve) 15 b4 (starting the fight to regain control of d4) 15...♜ac8 16 ♜ac1 ♜h5 17 ♙g5 ♜c7 18 ♜e2! (now the break 18 a4?! is not promising: there would follow 18...cxb4 19 ♜xb5 ♜b8 20 ♜bd4 ♜xc1 21 ♜xc1 ♜c5 and

Black has managed to bring the fight to the queenside, where he has a passed pawn; with the text-move, White heads for the kingside) 18...♜b8 19 g4 ♜hf6 20 ♜g3, and we reach a kind of Ruy Lopez in which White has made progress on the kingside, and his position is preferable.

b) 13...c4 14 ♙c2 ♜c5 (D) is the most active way of defending d6.

W



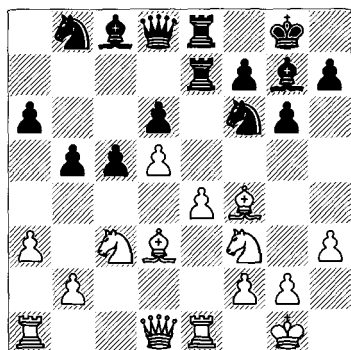
Black aspires to a future advance of the queenside with ...a5 and ...b4, although he gives up control of d4. Let's note that by moving the knight from d7 Black loses control of e5. Browne-de Firmian, USA Ch, Key West 1994 continued 15 ♜d2 (preparing ♜ad1 in order to think about e5 later on) 15...♙b7 16 ♜ad1 ♜b6 17 ♙h6 (still inadequate is 17 e5?! dxe5 18 ♜xe5 ♜ad8 19 d6 ♙f8) 17...♜fd7?! (anyone who plays the King's Indian, the Pirc or the Dragon knows the importance of the g7-bishop; its exchange leaves the king's position weak, and in this case the d4-square is even weaker; 17...♙h8! is preferable) 18 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 19 ♜d4+ f6 20 ♜d2! (making way for the f2-pawn) 20...♜ac8 (Black cannot advance with 20...a5? due to 21 a4! ♜xa4 22 ♜xb6 ♜dxb6 23 ♜xb5, winning material, but 20...♜e7 at once is better, intending ...♜ae8) 21 ♜e3! (the complement of the previous move) 21...♜e7 22 f4, and White has the advantage because of his more active pieces and the possibility of breaking with e5.

13 ♙f4 ♜ae7 (D)

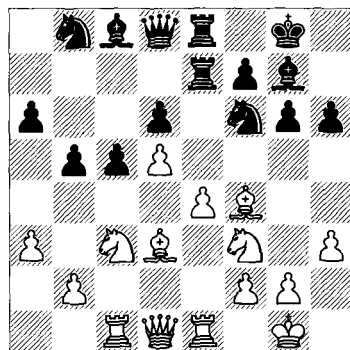
14 ♜c1!

We already know White's plan – to play b4 as well as the preparatory moves ♜d2 and

W



W



♖a1. In this case the move-order is important. 14 ♖d2 ♙b7 and now:

a) In Banikas-Mastrovasilis, Thessaloniki 2001, White played 15 b4?! but the importance of getting the queen's rook off the long diagonal before playing b4 became apparent after 15...c4 16 ♙c2 ♜xe4! 17 ♙xe4 ♙xc3 18 ♖xc3 ♙xe4 19 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 20 ♙h6 f6, and White's initiative didn't compensate for the pawn.

b) After 15 ♖a1, Black can reply 15...♗b6. This position has been reached many times by transposition, with Black playing ...♗b6 earlier, but here Black has something better, namely 15...b4!, with a very good position after 16 axb4 cxb4 17 ♖a2. Then 17...♜xe4 18 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 19 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 20 ♜xb4 ♗b6 is satisfactory, but it seems even better to leave the a2-knight inactive by playing 17...a5!, when after 18 ♙g5 ♜bd7, Black's position is more harmonious.

14...♗b6

Karpov points out that 14...b4 is not adequate due to 15 axb4 cxb4 16 ♖a4 ♜xe4 17 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 18 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 19 ♙xd6, with advantage to White. Here we see again the importance of occupying the c-file. Graf-Janž, Bundesliga 2005/6 continued 19...♜d7 20 ♖d3 ♜f6 21 ♙e5 ♙f5 22 ♖xa6 ♜xd5 23 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 24 ♜c5 ♙f4 25 ♖e2, and the black pieces were compromised.

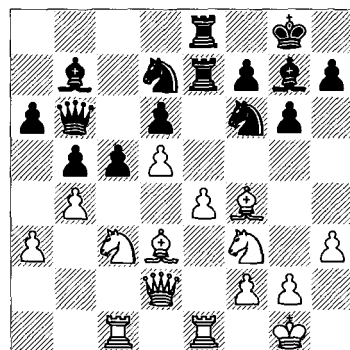
In Onishchuk-Jobava, World Team Ch, Beer-sheba 2005, 14...h6 (D) was played.

Black's idea is to play on the kingside, where he has more forces. There followed 15 b4 c4 16 ♙b1 g5 17 ♙h2 g4 18 hxg4 ♙xg4 19 ♖d2! ♙xf3 20 gxf3 ♙h8 21 ♙h1, and we see that Black's plan of opening the kingside was not successful – the doubled pawns strengthen

White's centre and the opening of the g-file favours White. Black very imaginatively played 21...♜bd7!, ready to give up the exchange and a pawn to seize the dark squares. If 22 ♙xd6, there would follow 22...♙e5! 23 ♙xe5 ♜xe5 24 ♙g2 ♜h5 25 ♙h1 ♖f6 and 26...♜f4+, which is somewhat reminiscent of the two-pawn sacrifice from Kotov-Gligorić, Zurich Candidates 1953. White declined the offer with 22 ♙g1! and after 22...♜e5, 23 ♙g3! followed by ♙cg1 seemed very strong – the advance of the f-pawn starts to be frightening.

15 b4 ♜bd7 16 ♖d2 ♙b7 (D)

W



17 ♙e3!

By putting the c5-pawn under pressure, White hopes to force either its advance or its exchange. Retreating the bishop on the other diagonal by 17 ♙h2?! proved inaccurate in Gelfand-Topalov, Monte Carlo (Amber blindfold) 2001; there followed 17...c4 18 ♙c2 ♜e5! 19 ♜xe5 (if 19 ♜d4?, then 19...♜d3!) 19...dxe5, reaching one of the few positions where taking with a pawn on e5 is satisfactory for Black, because of the inactivity of the h2-bishop.

17...♖d8 18 ♜b1

This is a critical moment. White threatens to break with a4, and because of the presence of the e3-bishop, it is necessary to consider an exchange sacrifice on e4.

18...♟h5?

This removes the knight from the centre. In the game Aleksandrov-Scherbakov, Calcutta 2002, 18...♖c7 19 ♜ec1 c4 20 ♟c2 was played. Now Black got a good game by 20...♟xe4! 21 ♟xe4 ♜xe4 22 ♟xe4 ♜xe4. For the exchange, Black has a pawn, while his passed pawn has gained in value and White's d5-pawn will suffer after a future ...♟f6.

19 a4!

The tension increases on the flank that suits White.

19...cxb4 20 ♜xb4 ♖a5

After 20...a5 21 ♜xb5 ♟a6 22 ♜bb1 (perhaps the exchange sacrifice 22 ♟d4! is even better – it's not always Black who is going to sacrifice!) 22...♟xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♟xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♜xe4 25 ♖b5, with advantage to White according to Karpov: the queenside is weak, and White will vigorously invade it with ♜ec1 and ♟d2.

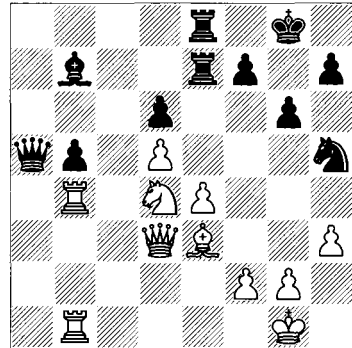
21 ♜eb1 ♟c5 22 axb5 ♟xc3

If 22...♟xd3 23 ♖xd3 ♟xc3 24 ♖xc3, White wins material, as 24...♜xe4? loses to 25 ♜xe4 ♖xc3 26 ♜xe8+ ♟g7 27 ♟d4+.

23 ♖xc3 ♟xd3 24 ♖xd3 axb5 25 ♟d4! (D)

The most precise: White now gets a powerful pawn on the sixth rank and wins easily. 25 ♟d2 would allow more resistance by 25...♟a6.

B

**25...♜xe4 26 ♟c6 ♜xe3 27 fxe3**

Not 27 ♖xe3? because of 27...♟xc6.

27...♟xc6 28 dxc6 ♖b6 29 ♜c1 ♜c8 30 ♜xb5 ♖a6 31 ♖c4 ♖a3 32 ♜b3 1-0

Summary

Black reconciled himself to a solid but passive defence in Game 5. White could manoeuvre at will, but his attempts to break through left his king weak, which became apparent after the complications.

The exchange of the dark-squared bishops was a factor on several occasions in this chapter. Only occasionally is this exchange acceptable for Black; e.g., when he gets to control the dark squares in some other way. Generally the weaknesses thus created around his king and the removal of the pressure on the diagonal are a significant loss.

In Estremera-A.Hoffman, Mancha Real 2000, mentioned in the note to Black's 12th move, a hasty break with e5 was refuted with an exchange sacrifice, 18...♜xe5!, when Black's control of the dark squares gave him the advantage.

On Black's 9th move from Game 6, in a variation from Garcia Ilundain-Magerramov, Nîmes 1991, we saw the manoeuvre ...♟e8-c7 to support ...b5, in good circumstances.

When White doesn't play e4, the space won by playing ...f5 can be useful for Black, as in Peng Zhaoqin-de Firmian, Stockholm 2004.

With a black knight on e5, the d3-square is one of the usual targets. But if the e5-knight is stabilized with ...g5, Black's dream is to settle on d3, after the manoeuvre ...c4 and ...♟c5, as we saw in Danailov-Marin, Benasque 2000, cited in the note to White's 12th move.

The sacrifice 14...b5!! (seen in Game 6) comes more easily to a Benko Gambit player, showing once more the importance of knowing varied opening set-ups.

The play in Game 7 revolved around the break b4, as we also saw in Game 2 (Classical Variation). Seldom is conceding the d4-square to a knight acceptable to Black. We saw again the manoeuvre ...♜a7-e7, after which the exchange sacrifice on e4 is a resource always to bear in mind.

3 Fianchetto Variation

White often chooses to develop his king's bishop to g2, by some such sequence as 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0. The g2-bishop is temporarily passive. There is neither pawn contact nor direct threats against Black, which allows him more options for how to develop his forces. On the other hand, White's flexibility enables him to combine the typical plans ♘d2-c4 and the central expansion e4, f4, etc., without ruling out yet another typical plan like b4.

The virtues of the fianchetto can be seen in the event of White successfully playing his break e4-e5. The g2-bishop would then firmly support the passed d-pawn, and increase its control of the c6-square, which is important when Black plays ...b5. However, Black's plan of expanding on the queenside is one of his main ideas, as in almost all the lines of the Modern Benoni.

Black adopts a set-up with ...♘bd7 in **Game 8**. White carries out the manoeuvre ♘d2-c4, while Black prepares and carries out his ...b5 break. Alternative plans for both sides are analysed too.

In **Game 9** White chose to play ♗f4, the idea being a quick e5. When this was neutralized, White opted for another typical plan, the b4 break.

Black plays ...♘a6 in **Game 10**. White chooses the sharpest line, leading to a strange material imbalance. Quieter and more typical options are also analysed in the notes.

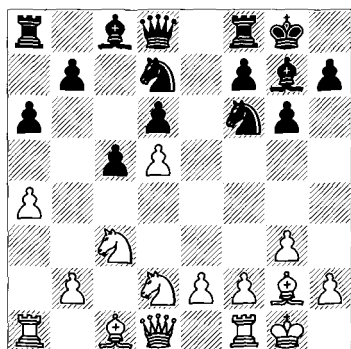
Game 8 [A64]

Viktor Mikhalevski – Yehuda Grünfeld

Givatayim 2004

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2 (D)

B



The f3-knight heads for c4, from where it puts pressure on d6. The two typical plans are kept in reserve: the b4 break and the central advance e4, with the eventual e5 break.

Black has as his basic target the expansion on the queenside with ...b5, although the absence of the f3-knight from the kingside also justifies active play against White's king.

11...♗e8 12 h3

Controlling the g4-square to restrict the mobility of the black knights. If now 12...♗e5?, naturally there would follow 13 f4.

It is possible to play 12 ♘c4 at once, when the game has a similar character to what we are going to see, after 12...♘b6 13 ♘a3 ♗d7.

12...♖b8 13 ♖c4

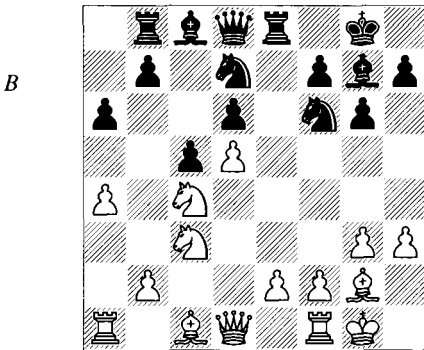
By attacking d6 White delays the ...b5 break. Another radical way of stopping it is by 13 a5, but with the knight on d2 and not on c4, this is not so promising. Black opens the b-file and his pieces wake up: 13...b5 14 axb6 ♖xb6!. Then:

a) The development of Araque-Morović, Cali 2001 is instructive: after 15 e4?! ♖fd7, Black achieved a comfortable regrouping. The black knights are heading for the weak squares d3 and c4, and the b6-knight can support the ...c4 advance. There followed 16 ♖c2 ♖e5 17 f4 ♖ec4 18 ♖f3 and now the thrust 18...f5! weakened White's centre at a moment when it had no strength to advance.

b) If 15 ♖b3, intending ♖a5, Black has 15...♖c4.

c) It is best not to weaken the centre yet, and to play 15 ♖c2, which Black can counter in several ways, such as 15...c4 or 15...♖fd7. 15...♖d7 is also possible, the idea being to play ...♖b5 later on, supporting the possible ...c4 advance, and controlling the critical c4- and d3-squares. In this case 16 ♖xa6? is inappropriate due to 16...♖c8.

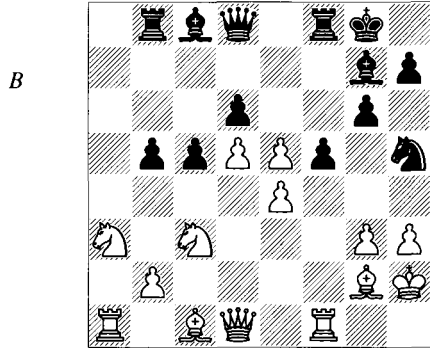
We now return to 13 ♖c4 (D):

**13...♖b6**

Black chooses the most positional line, seeking play on the queenside. There is an important alternative, namely to seek complications on the kingside with 13...♖e5. Black is forced to give up a piece in many lines, but that is precisely what he is looking for: an extremely tactical game. The most famous game of the line is Korchnoi-Kasparov, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, which continued 14 ♖a3 ♖h5 15 e4 ♖f8

(15...♖d7!?, seeking to play ...b5) 16 ♖h2 f5 (16...♖d7!?) 17 f4 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖axb5 fxe4 20 ♖xe4 ♖d7 21 ♖e2 ♖b6 22 ♖a3! ♖be8, and here, instead of 23 ♖d2?, which was met with 23...♖xb2!, White could have kept his extra pawn with 23 ♖g2!.

Nevertheless there is much ground to uncover. More recently, instead of 19 ♖axb5, 19 fxe5? (D) was played.



There followed one of the latent sacrifices on White's king's position, 19...♖xg3!, and Black won after 20 ♖f3 ♖xe5 21 ♖axb5 ♖h4 22 exf5 ♖xf5 23 ♖a4 ♖e4?! (23...c4!) 24 ♖xf8+?? ♖xf8 25 ♖g1 ♖e2+! 26 ♖xe2 ♖g3 27 ♖f4 ♖xf4 28 ♖xe4 ♖g3+ 29 ♖h1 ♖f1+ 0-1 Van Wely-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2002. Timman pointed out some mistakes for both sides, but the evaluation of 19 fxe5? is clear.

14 ♖a3

This temporary retreat is necessary – otherwise Black solves his mobility problems. Now he has to use several tempi to prepare ...b5. 14 ♖xd6? is wrong due to 14...♖xd6 15 ♖f4 ♖e5, but we have to bear in mind this sacrifice in similar positions where Black hasn't played ...♖e8.

14...♖d7 15 e4

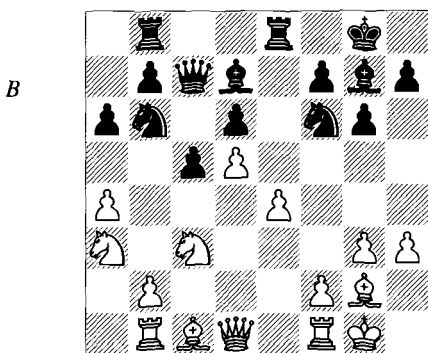
15 ♖f4?! is a known mistake owing to 15...♖h5!, and after, for instance, 16 ♖xd6 ♖xc3 17 ♖xb8 ♖xb2, White loses material.

Again 15 a5 has to be considered. Here the control of b5 gives Black enough counterplay with the manoeuvre 15...♖c8 16 ♖c4 ♖b5! (as in other lines, it is advantageous for Black to exchange this bishop for the active c4-knight) 17 ♖b3 ♖xc4 18 ♖xc4 ♖d7, and Black has

agile piece-play; e.g., 19 ♖d3 ♜e5 20 ♖c2 ♜a7 (heading for b5) 21 ♜e4 ♜b5 22 e3 f5 23 ♜d2 c4!, with active play – of White’s old control over c4 there is nothing left. If now 24 f4?!, there follows 24...c3! 25 bxc3 ♜d7. Mikhalevski-Morović, European Ch, Saint Vincent 2000 continued 24 ♜xc4 ♜c8 25 ♜a4 and after the simplification on c4, the a5-pawn fell.

15...♜c8

15...♖c7 is also possible, and it can transpose to the main line after 16 ♜e3 ♜c8 17 ♖d3. It is important to bear in mind a typical resource that can occur after 16 ♜b1 (D).



Now comes 16...♜xa4! – “there are few positions where this resource is not sound” according to Watson. Mikhalevski-de Firmian, Copenhagen 2000 continued 17 ♜xa4 b5 (winning back the piece) 18 ♜xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♜e3 and here Mikhalevski’s suggestion 19...♖b4 is strong, keeping the queen active. His line continues 20 f3 ♜bc8 21 ♖d3 ♜h5 22 g4 ♜g3 23 ♜f2 f5, and Black’s activity is huge.

16 ♖d3

Again stopping ...b5.

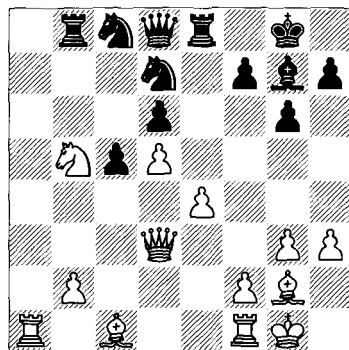
16...♖c7

The optimistic sacrifice 16...b5?! doesn’t appear sound: after 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♜axb5 ♜xb5 19 ♜xb5 ♜d7 (D) Black gets some pressure on the queenside, but unlike in a Benko Gambit, White’s queenside is free.

After 20 ♜c3 ♜e5 21 ♖c2 (Ljubojević-Barlov, Yugoslav Ch, Vrbas 1982), the typical advance 21...c4! is strong, gaining control of d3.

In Avrukh-Gashimov, Athens 2005 the prophylactic 20 ♖e2! was played, stopping that

W

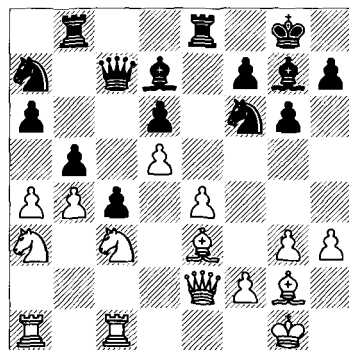


counterplay, for it prevents 20...♜e5? due to 21 f4. After 20...♖b6 21 ♜a3! it was White who gained control of c4. There followed 21...♖b3 (not 21...♜xb2? because of 22 ♜b1) 22 ♜c4 ♜e5 23 ♜a5 ♖d3, and the struggle for control of d3 was won by White with 24 ♖d1!. Avrukh stresses that modest-looking moves like this are difficult to see. Black won’t be able to bolster d3.

17 ♜e3 ♜a7 18 ♜c4

The b4 break can be prepared with 18 ♜fc1. After 18...b5 19 b4 c4, 20 ♖e2 (D) brings about the following position.

B



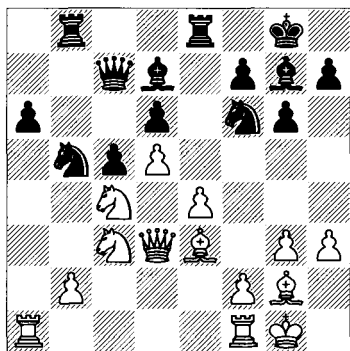
It is important not to end up with the pieces clogged up on the queenside, giving White a free hand. This would happen, as we know, if White played 21 a5. After 20...bxa4! 21 ♜xc4 ♜b5 22 ♜xb5 ♜xb5 White gave up a pawn with 23 e5 in Korchnoi-Franco, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, but after 23...dxe5 24 ♖a2 ♜f8 25 ♜c5?! ♜xc5! 26 bxc5 ♖xc5 27 ♜xe5, Black could have secured the advantage with 27...♖d6!.

In the post-mortem, Korchnoi suggested 20 ♖f1 as better, for in some lines it was important

that the queen was off the e-file. However, practice has shown that the evaluation is similar: 20...bxa4 21 ♖xc4 ♜b5 22 ♜xa4 ♜xe4 23 ♙xe4 ♙xa1 24 ♜d2 ♙xh3! 25 ♜xc7 ♙xf1 26 ♜c1 (Cvitan-Cebalo, Yugoslav Ch 1985) and now 26...♙d4! favours Black.

18...b5 19 axb5 ♜xb5 (D)

It is not possible to keep the structure intact with 19...axb5? due to 20 ♜xd6!.



W

20 ♙d2

This is the complement of 18 ♜c4: the bishop is ready to go to c3. 20 ♜xa6 is no good since after 20...♜xc3 21 bxc3 ♙b5 White must give up the exchange since a retreat of the a6-rook is strongly met by 22...♜d7. This train of thought led to the interesting sacrifice 20 e5!?, getting reasonable compensation after 20...dxe5 21 ♜xa6 ♜xc3 22 ♜xc3 ♙b5 23 ♜fa1 ♙xa6 24 ♜xa6 ♜d7 25 d6 ♜d8 26 ♜d3 ♜f6 27 ♜a7 in Zoler-Bar, Tel Aviv 2002.

20...♜xc3 21 ♙xc3 ♙b5 22 ♜fe1 ♜h5

22...♜d7 23 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 24 ♜c3+ ♙g8 (if 24...f6 25 ♜a5 ♜e5, seeking counterplay against d3, there follows 26 ♜e3!) 25 ♜a5 left White somewhat better in Tkachev-Cebalo, Medulin 2002.

23 ♙f1!

Solving the problems of the pin.

23...♜e7 24 ♜d2!

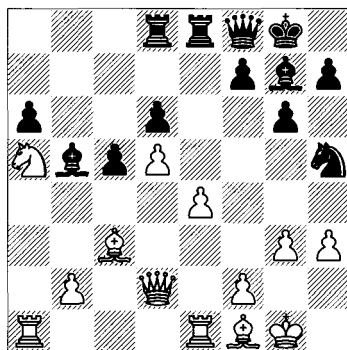
Preventing 24...♜g5.

24...♜bd8 25 ♜a5 ♜f8 (D)

26 ♜c6!

White has made progress. The c6-knight is untouchable because ...♙xc6 would leave many weaknesses unprotected. White slowly prepares the advance of his kingside.

W



26...♙d4 27 g4! ♙h6

Seeking complications, because 27...♙xc3 28 bxc3 ♜g7 is worse: the black pieces are badly placed, and White can choose between the advance 29 f4, and playing against the weak pawn with 29 ♙xb5 and ♜d3.

28 ♜d1 ♜f4 29 g5! ♙xg5 30 ♜g4 f5

Another way of giving up the piece and trying to complicate matters is 30...♙xf1!? 31 ♙xf1 f5 32 ♜xg5 fxe4.

31 ♜xg5 fxe4 32 ♙d2! ♜d3 33 ♙xd3 ♙xd3 34 b4!

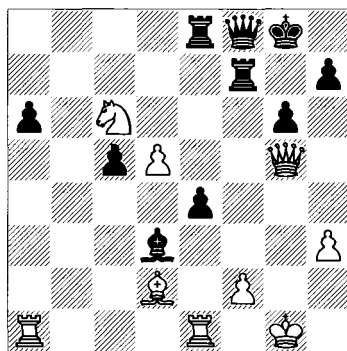
The white king is unprotected and Black has excellent practical chances. With this move, White tries to transfer the fight to the queenside.

34...♜f7 35 bxc5

35 ♜h4 is preferable, keeping the tension on the queenside.

35...dxc5 (D)

W



36 ♜ac1?

It was necessary to defend f2 with 36 ♜g3, or with 36 ♜h4 intending ♙h6.

36...♜f5

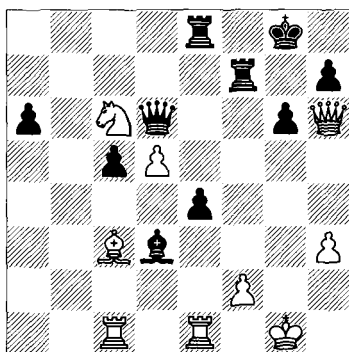
With 36...♙xf2 Black would be able to draw at least; for example, 37 d6 ♖xd6 38 ♖xf2 ♗h2+ 39 ♖e3 ♗xh3+ 40 ♖f2 ♗h2+.

37 ♗h6 ♗d6?

Black should definitely have gone for the endgame after 37...♗xh6! 38 ♙xh6 ♙xd5.

38 ♙c3! ♙f7 (D)

W



39 f4!

This elegant move leads to a strong attack against the black king. Black will regret his failure to exchange queens.

39...c4

After 39...♗xf4 40 ♗xf4 ♙xf4 41 d6 ♙f7 42 ♙e5, the pawn promotes. The influence of the f4-pawn is felt in case of 39...♗xd5 40 ♙e5 ♙b7 41 ♙g4; for instance, 41...♙e6 42 f5! ♗xf5 43 ♙f1 ♙xf1 44 ♙xf1, winning.

40 ♙e3

Again it was strong to use e5 as springboard with 40 ♙e5.

40...♗xd5 41 ♙e5 ♗c5 42 ♙ce1 ♙b7 43 ♙g4! ♙ee7 44 ♖h1 ♙e6 45 ♙f6+ ♙xf6 46 ♙xf6 c3 47 f5! 1-0

This further advance is decisive. Mikhalevski points out 47...c2 (if 47...♗xf5, then 48 ♙xc3 wins) 48 fxg6 c1♗ 49 gxh7+ ♙xh7 50 ♙g3+ ♖f7 51 ♗g6+ ♖e6 52 ♙b2+.

Game 9 [A63]

Denis Evseev – Miso Cebalo

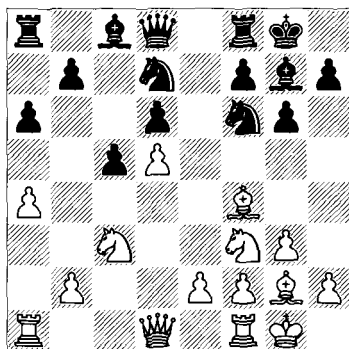
Reggio Emilia 2005/6

1 d4 ♙f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♙c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♙f3 g6 7 g3 ♙g7 8 ♙g2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♙bd7

The alternative is 10...♙e8, when 11 ♙f4 can be met by 11...♙e4 leading to a different type of position. Instead, 11 ♙d2 ♙bd7 is Game 8.

11 ♙f4 (D)

B



White chooses a different plan from the manoeuvre ♙d2-c4. With this move he wins a

tempo by attacking d6, and by controlling the e5-square he strengthens the plan of breaking with e4 and e5. The plan based on b4 is very popular too, as it is also a means of pre-empting Black's counterplay with ...b5.

11...♗e7

The alternative is 11...♗c7, which has its pros and cons. From c7 the queen has more influence over the queenside, controlling the invasion square a7, which is important in the event of ...♙b8 and ...b5, and the opening of the a-file. The negative side is that the c-file can become an awkward place for the queen if White plays ♙c1, strengthening the plan b4. The move also rules out the typical manoeuvre ...♙e8-c7.

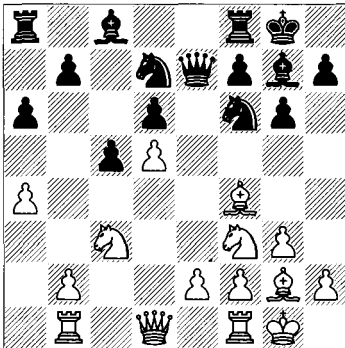
12 h3

White decides to prevent the manoeuvre ...♙g4-e5 before deciding upon his next step. This is one of several logical moves that pop up very often in this and other lines of the Benoni. Let's briefly consider several of the other options:

a) One must always consider the direct occupation of the centre with 12 e4. The critical reply is 12...♘g4, exploiting the fact that after a future ...♗e5, on top of c4, the knight also looks forward to the potentially weak d3-square – an eventual ...c4 and ...♗d3 is an ideal goal in the Benoni.

b) 12 ♖b1 (*D*) plans the break b4. Now:

B



b1) 12...♘g4 is a critical reply: 13 ♖c1 (protecting the c3-knight in order to be able to play b4, and planning ♗h6; in case of 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 f5, White must not hurry to play 15 b4? due to the tactical blow 15...♗xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♗e3!) 13...♗de5 and here:

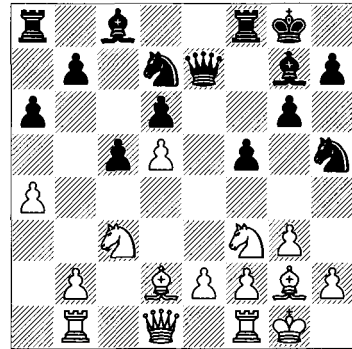
b11) After 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗h6 ♗xh6 16 ♖xh6 ♗f5! 17 ♖a1 (playing e4 weakens d3), Black gets counterplay with 17...b5! 18 axb5 axb5, and then wins back the pawn by ...♖b8, with a good game. The exchange of some pieces is generally acceptable for Black, who has little space.

b12) The retreat 14 ♗e1 doesn't present any problems either. In Urban-Hass, Krynica 1988, the continuation was 14...♗f5 15 e4 ♗d7 – we already know this resource: Black loses a tempo, but he wants to exploit the weaknesses of d3 and c4 with his e5-knight. It is also worth considering the typical move 14...f5.

b2) 12...♗h5 is always a move to consider, making way for the f-pawn to control e4. 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 f5 (*D*).

Now White has 15 ♗g5!, stressing the main problem of ...f5, the weakening of e6. White won't hesitate to give up a pawn if necessary to open the diagonal of the g2-bishop. The opening of the b-file would be a good complement,

W



of course. 15...♗df6 16 b4 c4 (if 16...b6, there follows 17 bxc5 bxc5, and here instead of the hasty 18 ♗e6? ♗xe6 19 dxe6 ♖ab8, it would be better to play 18 ♖b3 or 18 ♖c2, so as later on to try to exploit the opening of the b-file) 17 b5 a5 and now in Tkachev-David, Cannes 1999, White chose 18 b6, cutting off the a5-pawn, which together with the isolation of c4 will have its reward. Another idea is 18 ♖c2 in order to open the game with e4.

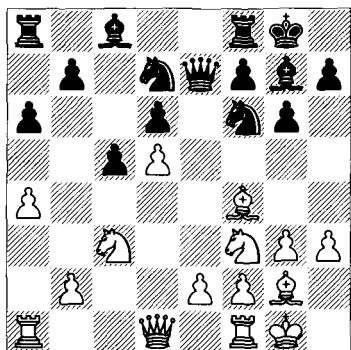
c) 12 a5 seeks to block the queenside. The idea is interesting although somewhat slow. If Black didn't do anything active, White would play ♖b1 and b4, and Black's majority would be spoiled, with a weak pawn on b7. Against this, Black can break with the immediate 12...b5, but it needs to be followed up vigorously: 13 axb6 ♖b8 14 e4 ♖xb6 15 ♗d2 ♖b4! 16 ♗a2 ♖xb2 17 ♗c4 ♗xe4 (Rybka); e.g., 18 ♗xb2 ♗xb2 19 ♖e1 f5 20 ♖b1 ♖f6 or 18 ♖e1 ♖xf2 19 ♗xe4 ♗d4 20 ♗e3 ♖xe4 21 ♗xf2 ♖xd5 22 ♗xd4 cxd4 23 ♗d2 ♗e5 with a chaotic position where Black's chances seem acceptable. With the move-order 12...♖b8 13 e4 (if 13 ♗d2, Black manages to trick his opponent by playing 13...b5 14 axb6 ♗xb6!), besides 13...b5, Kapengut points out the interesting 13...h6, which we shall see on several occasions. Black prevents the manoeuvre ♗g5-e6, and so it is possible to play ...f5 with fewer risks.

We now return to 12 h3 (*D*):

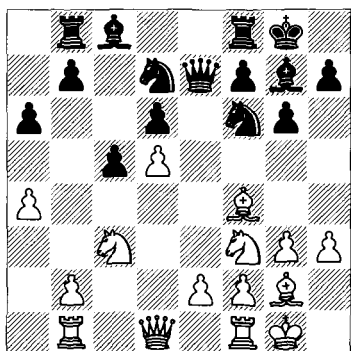
12...♖e8

This position can be reached via several move-orders. The idea of ...♖e8 is to make room for the queen to get out of the e-file with ...♖f8, from where it will control h6. There are alternatives.

B



B



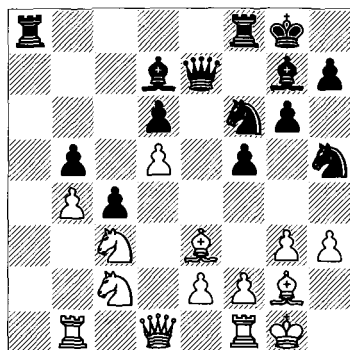
Here the direct 13...b5?! is dubious due to 14 axb5 axb5 15 b4!, so in Ivanchuk-Topalov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, 13...d8! was played, intending ...c7 to support ...b5. Here we see a different destination for the f6-knight from the lines we consider immediately below.

Now let's see the direct 12...h5 13 g5 f6 14 d2 f5. White then has several ideas:

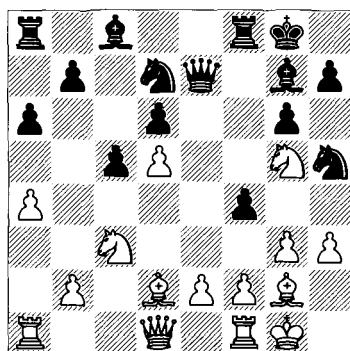
a) 15 b1?!, intending b4, is dubious in view of 15...d6!?, when 16 b4? is not possible because of 16...e4! 17 dxe4 fxe4 18 d5 e3!, exploiting the weakness created by 12 h3 – this is a tactical detail always to bear in mind. After 19 ex3 d3, Black gets the initiative. 16 e1 was played in Oms Pallise-Marin, Andorra 2003, but with these losses of time the typical blocking idea b4 is not so effective. There followed 16...d7 17 d2 c2 b5 18 b4 c4 19 axb5 axb5 20 e3 (D).

It seems that White is about to get an ideal position with 21 d4, but this is not so. In the

B



W



first place this is not a threat due to the blow 21...d3!, and in the second place the black pieces are very active, and are not forced to defend passively the weaknesses on b5, c6 and e6. 20...e4, getting rid of the blockader of the passed pawn on c4, is interesting. Black chose the more active 20...f4, and after 21 gxf4 d8 22 d4 dxf4 23 exf4 fxf4 24 e6, instead of 24...xe6 (as played in the game), 24...h4! is much stronger, activating the rook before taking on e6. Then 25 d3? is not possible due to 25...xg7, winning a pawn, and if 25 e4 a2, Black has an excellent game.

b) The critical line again seems to be 15 d5, attempting to exploit the weakness of e6. 15...f4 (D) and then:

b1) 16 gxf4 dxf4 17 exf4 fxf4 18 e6 b4 19 c2 (P.Nikolić-de Firmian, Qaqortoq 2003) and now Black can neutralize the occupation of e6 with 19...f6! followed by 20...f8, with active pieces and a strong dark-squared bishop.

b2) White used a more ambitious idea in Shulman-Shabalov, USA Ch, San Diego 2006:

16 ♖e6, and after 16...fxg3, the idea is not to capture the exchange, when Black would have ample compensation, but to give up a pawn to support a very strong knight on e6 that paralyzes the black position. After 17 f4 ♜f7 18 e4 ♙d4+ 19 ♖h1 ♜df6 20 f5 ♜g7 21 ♙g5 ♙e5 22 ♜b3 the lack of development of the black queenside was worrying.

13 e4 ♜f8

13...♜h5 is also possible at once, and if 14 ♙g5, then retreating to f8.

14 ♜e1 ♜h5 15 ♙e3

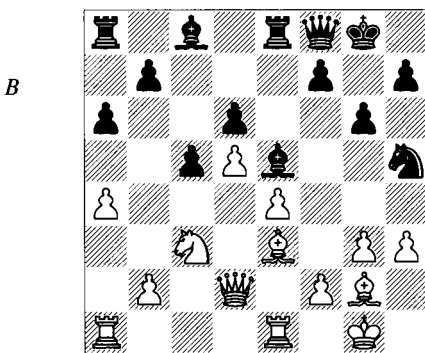
Once e4 is played, either the text-move or 15 ♙g5 seems preferable to 15 ♙d2.

15...♜e5

White has adequate compensation in case of 15...♙xc3 16 bxc3 ♜xe4 17 ♜d2 ♜e8 18 ♜c4 thanks to the weakness of the king's position and to the several weak squares on the queenside – as a result of the opening of the b-file the extra pawn becomes worthless.

The natural 15...♜b8?! is wrong in this position due to 16 g4! ♜hf6 17 ♙f4, and against the threat of breaking through with e5 under ideal circumstances, Black is virtually forced to play 17...♜e5 18 ♜xe5 dxe5 19 ♙e3 ending up with both a poor structure and badly placed pieces.

16 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 17 ♜d2 (D)



17...♙g7

This move prevents White's possible expansion on the kingside with f4 and g4. It was interesting to take up the gauntlet, entering the complications and speeding up the counterplay on the queenside with the natural move 17...♜b8!?. White's kingside is also weakened in case of 18 g4 ♜f6 (not 18...♜g7? because

the knight ends up badly placed on g7 and White can break in the centre with 19 f4 ♙f6 20 e5! ♙e7 21 ♜e4) 19 ♙h6 ♜e7 20 ♜e2 ♜d7, followed by ...b5 as soon as possible – the position is double-edged. Another idea is 18 a5, although here Black can be satisfied with the opening of the b-file after 18...b5 19 axb6 ♜xb6.

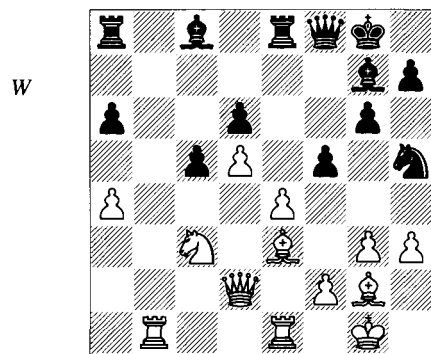
18 ♜ab1!

Black has managed to stop White's expansion plans in the centre and kingside, but he has no active way of opposing the other typical plan, and White ends up better.

18...f5 19 b4 b6

Thus the damage is reduced. It is worse to open up the b-file, as this would expose the weaknesses of b7 and d6.

20 bxc5 bxc5 (D)



21 exf5?!

This allows Black an easy regrouping. It is better to keep the tension with 21 ♜b6.

21...♙xf5 22 ♜b7 ♜f6 23 g4 ♙c8 24 ♜c7 ♜b8 25 ♜c2 ♜b7 26 ♜xb7 ♙xb7 27 ♜b3 ♙c8 28 ♙d2 ♜xe1+ 29 ♙xe1 h5

This weakens White's king's position, but it appears that the control White gets over f6, after a future ♜e4, is more important. Evseev recommends 29...♜e7 30 ♙d2 ♜b7 31 ♜c2 with equal chances.

30 g5 ♜d7 31 ♜e4 ♜e5 32 ♜b8 ♜d3 33 ♙d2 ♙d7 34 ♜xf8+?

Evseev points out that both 34 ♜xd6 and 34 ♜b6 would have kept White's advantage. The exchange of queens improves the position of Black's king.

34...♙xf8 35 ♙f1 ♜e5 36 ♙g2 ♙xa4 37 ♜xd6 ♙b3 38 f4 ♙xd5+ 39 ♙f2 ♜f7 40 ♜xf7

♟d4+ 41 ♟e3 ♟xe3+ 42 ♟xe3 ♟xf7 43 ♟xa6 h4!

White now ends up with an unpleasant weakness on h3, forcing him to play carefully in order to hold the endgame.

44 ♟f1

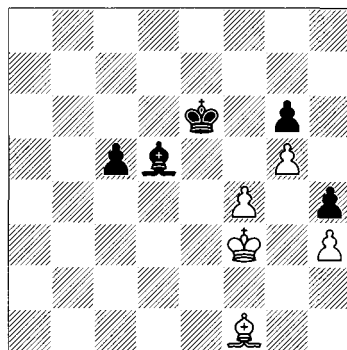
Evseev points out that the pawn ending is losing: 44 ♟c8? ♟e6 45 ♟xe6+ ♟xe6 46 ♟e4 c4 47 f5+ gxf5+ 48 ♟d4 ♟f7 49 ♟xc4 ♟g6 50 ♟d4 ♟xg5 51 ♟e5 ♟g6 52 ♟d4 ♟h6! (this is the winning opposition; instead 52...♟f6 53 ♟d5 f4? doesn't work: 54 ♟e4 ♟g5 55 ♟d3! ♟f5 56 ♟d4, and draws) 53 ♟d5 ♟h5! 54 ♟d4 ♟g6!, winning.

44...♟a2 45 ♟e4 ♟e6 46 ♟f3 ♟d5+ (D)

47 ♟e3!

Overcoming another obstacle. The white king must control the c-pawn. 47 ♟g4? loses to

W



47...c4 48 ♟xh4 ♟f5! 49 ♟g3 c3 50 ♟d3+ ♟e4 51 ♟b5 ♟e6 52 ♟a4 c2 53 ♟xc2 ♟xc2, and the g6-pawn is enough to win.

47...♟f7 48 ♟d3 ♟e7 49 ♟e3 ♟e6 50 ♟e4 ♟d6 51 ♟d3 ♟d5 52 ♟e3 ♟e6 53 ♟e2 ♟e7 54 ♟d3 ♟f7 55 f5 gxf5 1/2-1/2

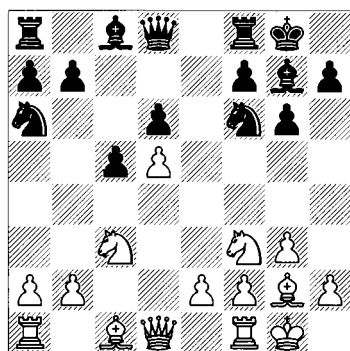
Game 10 [A62]

Levon Aronian – Kevin Spraggett

Gibraltar 2005

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♟c3 g6 7 ♟g2 ♟g7 8 ♟f3 0-0 9 0-0 ♟a6 (D)

W



This line is not so common, although it has been employed occasionally by great experts like Tal, and nowadays Topalov.

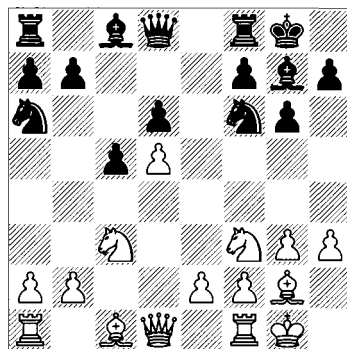
Black prepares the break ...b5 quickly with ...♟c7, but the knight doesn't control e5, so Black sometimes has to make passive and/or risky moves on the kingside to keep the tension.

10 ♟d2

White has two main plans. One is to put pressure on d6 with this standard manoeuvre ♟d2-c4 and then decide what to do. Going after the break e5 will still be a priority, even more so since a black knight on c7 doesn't contribute to the fight for the e5-square.

Another idea is to leave the f3-knight where it is and prepare e5 right away, starting with 10 h3 (D).

B

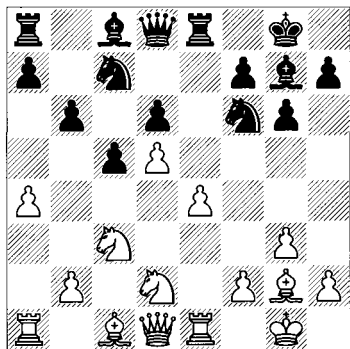


"Before playing e4 White prevents the exchange of the c8-bishop for the knight; in the

battle for the e5-square the f3-knight is destined to play an important role" – Korchnoi. Let's see a classic game where White achieves both his objectives: 10...♖c7?! 11 e4 ♘d7 12 ♙e1 ♗e8 (Black gives up on the ...b5 idea, and gets ready to answer the break e5 with simplifications and the blockade ...♘d6, which is a small defeat) 13 ♕g5! (now 13...f6 weakens the structure: the continuation would be 14 ♕e3, followed by moving the f3-knight, and then f4) 13...♕f6 (limiting the e8-knight's mobility) 14 ♕e3 ♖b8 15 a4 a6 16 ♕f1 ♙e7 17 ♘d2 ♘c7 18 f4, and White is ready to play e5, Korchnoi-Tal, USSR Ch, Erevan 1962.

After 10 h3 it is stronger to prevent e4 with 10...♙e8!, and then the most usual continuation is 11 ♘d2, since 11 ♙e1, insisting on e4, is met by 11...♘e4!, and with the exchange of knights Black gets a comfortable game: 12 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 13 ♘d2 ♙e8 and if 14 ♘c4, there follows 14...b5, whereas 14 a4 can be met by 14...♘b4, and the attack on d6 with 15 ♘c4 b6 16 ♕f4 is harmless due to 16...g5! 17 ♕xd6? ♕a6.

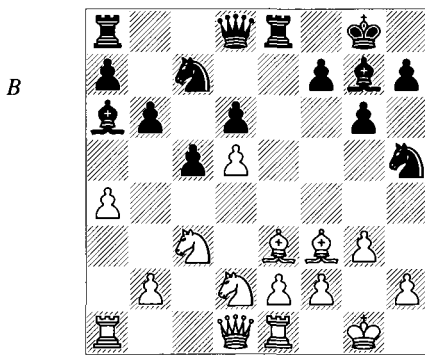
Black gets a reasonable game against the immediate 10 e4 with 10...♕g4 11 h3 ♕xf3 12 ♙xf3 ♘c7 13 a4 ♘d7, followed by some expansion on the queenside. Once the f3-knight is gone, it is clear that White's control over e5 diminishes. It is also possible to keep ...♕g4 in reserve, and play, for instance, 10...♙e8 11 ♘d2 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♙e1 (D).



We reach an interesting moment: the f1-rook steps off the f1-a6 diagonal and supports e5, but Black exploits the lack of control over g4 with his next manoeuvre: 13...♕g4! 14 ♘f3 (if 14 ♘c4, there follows 14...♕d4! and if 15

♙f1, Black gets a good game with 15...♕a6!) 14...♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5, followed by ...♖b8, with the idea of playing ...a6 and ...b5, Moskalenko-Ehlvest, Helsinki 1992.

Another idea is 10 ♕f4, which can be met with 10...♙e8. This position can also arise from 9...♙e8 10 ♕f4 ♘a6. Let's see an instructive example by Topalov: 11 ♘d2 (the f4-bishop suffers a little after this retreat) 11...♘h5! 12 ♕e3 ♘c7 13 a4 b6 14 ♕f3 ♕a6 15 ♙e1 (D) (the exchange 15 ♕xh5 gxf5 does not worry Black; it is true that the black pawns end up weak, but so also does the white king, which is more important).



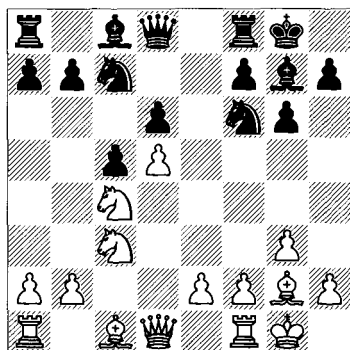
15...♙xe3! (one of Topalov's typical exchange sacrifices, although here it is thematic: White's structure is damaged and Black's minor pieces have strong squares, such as e5, which is ideal for a knight) 16 fxe3 ♘f6 17 ♙c2 ♙e7 18 e4 h5! (seeking to create another weakness in White's camp) 19 e3 ♕h6 20 ♘d1 ♙e8 21 ♘f2 ♘d7 22 b4 ♘e5 23 b5?! (after this White can only wait and see; it is better to open the game with 23 bxc5) 23...♕c8 24 ♕g2 h4, and a new weakness, g3, appears in White's camp, P.Nikolić-Topalov, Monte Carlo (Amber rapid) 2000.

10...♘c7 11 ♘c4 (D)

11...♘fe8

This is the main continuation, supporting d6. Against the obvious 11...b5?, there follows 12 ♘xd6! ♙xd6 13 ♕f4, and Black's position is difficult; e.g., 13...♙d7 14 d6 ♘e6 15 ♕xa8 ♘xf4 16 gxf4 ♙g4+ 17 ♕g2 ♙xf4 18 ♙c1 ♙xd6 19 ♘xb5 and Black is clearly worse, Ulybin-Tunik, Russian Team Ch, Podolsk 1992.

B

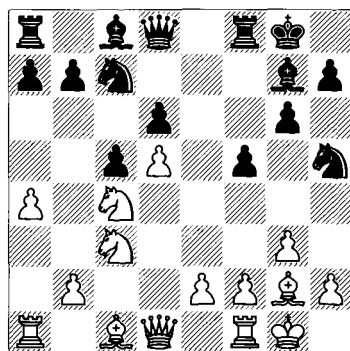


Also insufficient is 13...♖b6 14 d6 ♜d8?! (14...♞e6 is somewhat better) 15 dxc7 ♜xd1 16 ♜fxd1 ♞b7 17 ♞xb7 ♜xb7 18 ♜d8+ ♞e8 19 ♜ad1 (37 years later Atalik played 19 ♜b8, which is perhaps even better) 19...♞f6 20 ♜b8 ♜c8 21 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 22 ♞xb5 a6 23 ♞a7 1-0 Boleslavsky-Kapengut, Belorussian Ch, Minsk 1961.

Something similar happens after 11...b6?: there follows 12 ♞xd6! ♜xd6 13 ♞f4 ♜d7 14 d6 ♞e6 15 ♞xa8 ♞xf4 16 gxf4, and the compensation for the exchange is insufficient, Gleizerov-Minasian, Abu Dhabi 2004.

Another way of fighting against the break e4 and e5 is with the radical 11...♞h5 12 a4 f5 (D).

W



This idea appears very often – sometimes it is good and sometimes not so. By playing ...f5, besides preventing e4, Black tries to cut off the d5-pawn from its support. If White doesn't do anything special, Black will continue as in other lines, with ...b6, ...♞a6, ...♜d7, ...♞ae8, and lay siege to the d5-pawn.

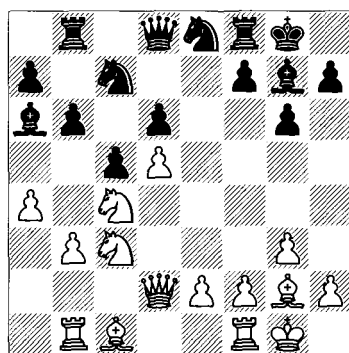
If 13 e4?!, there follows 13...f4!. The critical line is 13 ♞f3, after which 13...f4?! releases too

many squares. White exploited this with 14 ♞e4! fxe4 15 hxe4 ♞h3 16 ♜e1 ♞e8 17 ♞g5 ♜d7 18 ♞e6! in Sosonko-Blees, Dutch Team Ch 1993. Safer, although passive, is 13...♞f6 14 ♞f4 ♞fe8, followed by ...b6.

12 ♞f4

This move is the most energetic, and also preserves the most options. 12 e4 b5!? is just unclear. The main alternative is 12 a4 (preventing ...b5) 12...b6 (White must now prepare b3 by defending the c3-knight in order to counter ...♞a6) 13 ♜d2 (also possible are 13 ♜c2 and 13 ♞d2) 13...♞b8 14 ♜b1 (preparing b4) 14...♞a6 15 b3 (D).

B

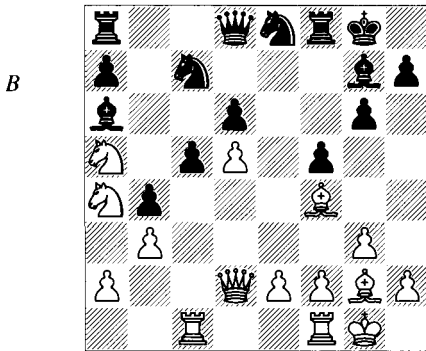


In Sosonko-Lautier, Lyons 1991, 15...b5?! was played. This active move allows White access to c6, without adequate compensation: after 16 ♞a5 ♜d7 17 ♞c6 ♜b7 18 axb5 ♞xb5 19 ♞xb5 ♜xb5 20 ♜a2, White was better because of the strong c6-knight and his greater piece activity. It is better to play 15...f5, reaching a type of structure that is fully playable, and under better circumstances than after 11...♞h5 and 12...f5.

12...b5

If 12...b6, there can follow the main threat of ♞f4, namely 13 ♞e4, which gives White some advantage after the forced 13...♞a6 14 ♞cxd6 ♞xb2. Here instead of 15 ♜b1, which was played in Delchev-Vezzosi, Reggio Emilia 2002, it seems more promising to continue 15 ♞xe8 ♜xe8 16 ♞g5; e.g., 16...♜d7 (if 16...f6?!, there follows 17 d6! fxe5 18 ♜b3+ ♞e6 19 ♜xb2 ♞d4 20 e3!, and Black regrets the absence of his dark-squared bishop) 17 d6! ♞xa1 (if 17...♞e6, then 18 ♞f6!) 18 ♜xa1 ♜xe4 19

♙xe4 ♜e8 20 dxc7 ♜xe4 21 ♖f6, and the c7-pawn together with the weakness of the king's position gives White the advantage. White can also play the standard 13 ♜c1, and after 13...f5! 14 ♖d2 ♙a6 15 b3, it is possible to continue with another main idea, 15...b5 16 ♘a5 b4 17 ♘a4 (D).



Here Gleizerov recommends 17...♙b5 or 17...♖d7. Instead, 17...♙b5? might appear strong at first, but was met by the spectacular 18 ♘c6 ♖d7 19 ♜xc5!! in Gleizerov-Suba, Mondariz 2000 – White will get two pawns for the exchange and a strong passed pawn, as well as useful open lines. Sacrifices on c5 are latent in this sort of position where Black pushes his queenside: the passed d5-pawn and the g2-bishop gain in strength. If 17...♙f6, another sacrifice can follow: 18 ♘xc5!.

It is also possible to play 12...f5 straight away.

13 ♘a5 f5

It is not possible to play 13...♙d7? due to 14 ♙b7 ♖e7 15 ♘xc5!, winning a pawn.

Again 13...b4 is possible: now White has to choose between 14 ♘c6 ♖d7 15 ♘a4 ♙a6 16 a3!, 14 ♙e4 leading to great complications after 14...♙xb2, and the simple 14 ♘a4.

14 ♘c6 ♖d7

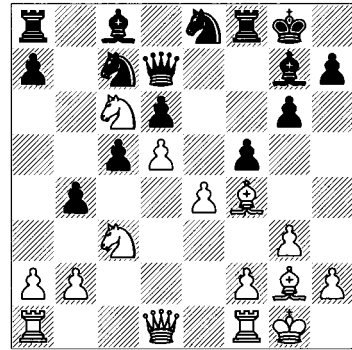
If 14...♖f6, the strongest seems to be to break through at once with 15 e4: after 15...fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♖xb2 17 ♜b1 ♖xa2 18 ♘d6 the passed pawn on d5 again becomes very strong.

15 e4! b4 (D)

16 e5!

This tactically sound break signals the triumph of White's strategy – the opening of the

W



long diagonal is almost always very favourable to White.

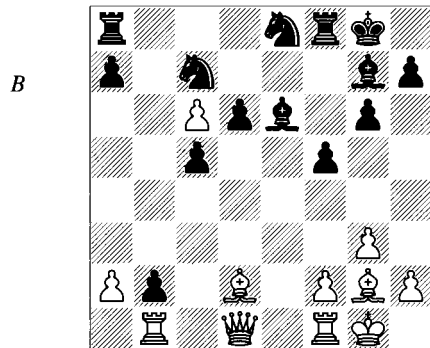
16...bxc3

After 16...dxe5?! 17 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 18 ♙xe5, Black's position is precarious: he will win back the piece but the two white bishops and the advance of the d-pawn will be very strong; e.g., 18...bxc3 19 d6 cxb2 20 ♜b1 ♖e6 21 ♜e1.

17 e6 ♖xc6

Giving back the piece is not very promising – the passed pawn is very strong after 17...♘xe6 18 dxe6 ♖c7 19 e7 ♜f7 20 bxc3! (threatening ♙d5) 20...♙b7 21 ♖a4, with the threat of ♘d8. White's advantage is overwhelming.

18 dxc6 cxb2 19 ♜b1 ♙xe6 20 ♙d2 (D)



This is an atypical ending. White has a materially winning advantage, but he will have to give back part of that material because the black pawns can become very dangerous.

20...♙xa2 21 ♖c2 ♙xb1 22 ♜xb1 ♜b8 23 ♙c3 ♙xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♜f7 25 ♜xb2 ♜b2 26 ♖xb2 a6 27 ♖d2 ♜e7 28 h4 h5

Black tries to build a fortress. White has a passed pawn, but that alone is not enough: in

order to get winning chances it is necessary to create more targets.

29 f3!

The aim is to get at the black king by opening up its defences.

29...♠f7 30 g4 fxg4 31 fxg4 hxg4 32 ♖f4+ ♜g7 33 ♖xg4 ♜f6 34 ♖g3 ♜e5 35 ♙f1 ♜e4 36 ♖g4 ♜f6 37 ♖c8 ♜fe8 38 ♙d3 ♜e3 39 ♙c2 ♜e1+ 40 ♙f2 ♜e6 41 ♙b3?!

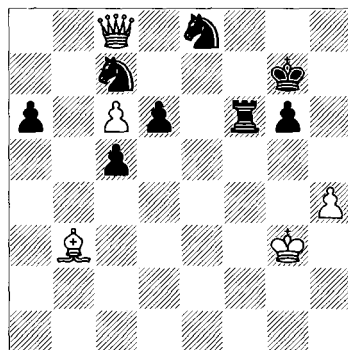
41 ♖d7+! is more incisive; if 41...♜h6 then 42 ♙b3 as in the game, while otherwise White plays ♖h7 and takes on g6.

41...♜f6+ 42 ♙g3 (D)

42...♜h6?!

Now Black won't be able to defend his king. 42...♜f8 was necessary.

B



43 ♖d7!

The threat of 44 ♙g8 is decisive.

43...d5 44 ♙xd5 g5 45 ♙e4 gxh4+ 46 ♙g4

1-0

Summary

White's plan of opposing ...b5 with the advance b4 was seen in Game 8, in the notes to White's 18th move, and tangentially on Black's 15th. The pros and cons of a quick a5 by White were seen in Araque-Morović, Cali 2001, mentioned on White's 14th move, and in Mikhalevski-Morović, European Ch, Saint Vincent 2000 (note to White's 15th move).

On Black's 15th move we see the important tactical resource ...♜xa4, in order to play ...b5, in Mikhalevski-de Firmian, Copenhagen 2000.

The manoeuvre ♜d2-c4-a5-c6 was successful in Game 8, as well as in P.Nikolić-Cebalo, Yugoslavia 1987 – see the note to White's 12th move in Game 9.

In Game 9, we see Black playing ...♜h5 and ...f5, a recurrent motif when White delays the move e4. On White's 12th move, the drawback of weakening e6 could be clearly seen in Tkachev-David, Cannes 1999. Instead in P.Nikolić-de Firmian, Qaqortoq 2003 (note to Black's 12th move), Black solves that drawback; in that same note Oms Pallise-Marin, Andorra 2003 is mentioned, when White plays ♜b1 and b4, gaining the d4-square, but for tactical reasons it is unsound in this case.

On Black's 12th move of Game 9 the plan of ...f5 is also analysed. There we see that White must be careful with the weakness created on g3 by h3: the e3-square can give rise to tactical blows, especially with the black queen on e7. In that same note, I draw attention to the plan of 13...♜e8, trying to get to c7 and support the break ...b5. This was effective in Ivanchuk-Topalov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

On Black's 17th move of Game 9 we see that Black misses a good opportunity to play ...b5 under reasonable conditions, and this allows White to play b4 advantageously. In Game 10, Black chose 9...♜a6, giving the struggle a different character: playing ...b5 becomes easier, but a defender of the e5-square is missing. Black gets a good game if he manages to get rid of his c8-bishop and exchange it for the f3-knight. On White's 10th move, the usefulness of White's move h3 was also seen in Moskalenko-Ehlvest, Helsinki 1992, where Black strongly played 13...♜g4!.

The exchange sacrifice 15...♜xe3!, seen in P.Nikolić-Topalov, Monte Carlo (Amber rapid) 2000 (note to White's 10th move in Game 10), is also to be kept in the tactical armoury.

The 'sleeping' strength of the g2-bishop was seen in the notes to Black's 11th move, among others in the brilliant example Boleslavsky-Kapengut, Belorussian Ch, Minsk 1961. The game is defined by the break e4-e5, but not for strategic reasons, rather because of a tactical duel where calculation is essential.

4 Mikenas, Taimanov and Four Pawns Attack

With the sequence 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 White adopts an aggressive stance. We can immediately see that the pawn-break e5 will feature prominently in White's plans. In return White shows his hand, and the e4-pawn is somewhat weakened, but of course this is not easy to exploit.

Game 11 examines the Mikenas Attack, by which White breaks through at once with 8 e5, rushing to the offensive at the first chance. He follows up by moving his only developed piece (the c3-knight) in order to prevent Black from getting his king to safety. The idea is dangerous, although it contradicts some general opening principles, such as completing development before taking such drastic measures. This variation is seldom used, and therefore the game references are often old.

The Taimanov Attack, 8 ♙b5+, is one of the most aggressive variations against the Modern Benoni. After 8...♘fd7 Black chooses the plan of 9...0-0 and 10...♘a6 in **Game 12**. In the main game, Black is permitted to achieve the blow ...f5 in a situation where it works well. Other ideas for both White and Black are also analysed in the notes, such as not playing 9 a4 and allowing ...a6 and ...b5.

We continue our examination of the Taimanov Attack in **Game 13**, but here Black chooses the paradoxical 9...♙h4+. After the obvious 10 g3, Black must move his queen again, and he therefore appears to lose two tempi, but as we shall see, things are not so clear, as White's extra moves are not unambiguously useful.

In **Game 14**, White prefers 8 ♘f3, reaching a position that often arises from the King's Indian Four Pawns Attack. However, there are many links between this line and the Taimanov Attack, for the plans are mainly dictated by the pawn-structure, and in particular White's mobile central majority, with the e5 advance an ever-present theme.

Games 15 and 16 feature lines that more often arise via a Classical move-order, with f4 being played only after ♘f3-d2. The Benoni Four Pawns move-order to reach these lines would be 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♙e2 ♗e8 10 ♘d2 (instead of the more critical 10 e5), and now 10...♘a6 11 0-0 (**Game 15**) or 10...♘bd7 11 0-0 (**Game 16**). The placement of the black knight, d7 or a6, makes Black's plans fairly different, despite the similarity of the rest of the pieces and the pawn-structure.

Game 11 [A66]

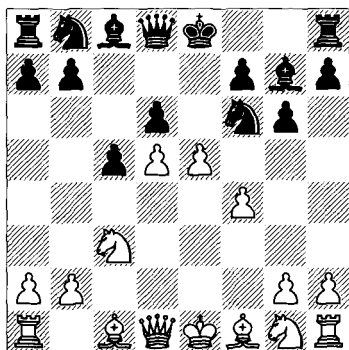
Hikaru Nakamura – Nick de Firmian

San Francisco 2002

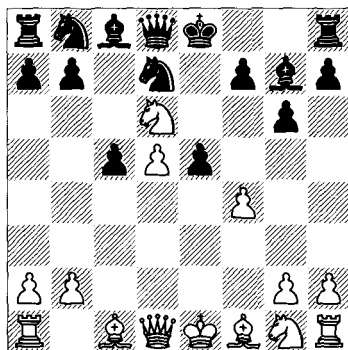
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 e5 (D)

This is the variation carrying the name of the Lithuanian master Vladas Mikenas. Although

B



B



it is not a very popular line in current practice, it is necessary to know it with a certain depth in order to be able to survive the onslaught. It is also highly instructive to see how the Benoni withstands White's most direct attempt to overrun it.

8...♟fd7

Also playable is 8...dxe5 9 fxe5 ♟fd7, which has been less investigated.

9 ♟e4

9 ♟b5 leads to the same position, whereas it wouldn't be consistent to play 9 exd6? in view of 9...0-0!, followed by 10...♟f6, when White has only managed to create weaknesses for himself since the d6-pawn cannot be defended.

9 e6 has been played occasionally. 9...fxe6 10 dxe6 ♟b6 (Watson suggests 10...♟xc3+, preventing 11 ♟e4, although this idea is not worrying either) and now:

a) After 11 a4?! ♟xe6 12 a5 ♟c8 13 ♟b5+ (Roa-Narciso, Spanish Team Ch, Ponferrada 1997) Black can achieve the better prospects with 13...♟c6!, threatening to castle, besides being able to drive back the b5-bishop with ...a6, since 14 a6 ♟e7! 15 ♟e2 ♟f7 is not dangerous: the c6-knight can go to d4, and the black king is about to castle 'by hand' after developing the h8-rook.

b) Against 11 ♟e4 it is possible to play 11...d5! 12 ♟xc5 ♟h4+! 13 g3 ♟e7 followed by ...0-0, and after the e6-pawn falls, Black will have a lead in development, while the weaknesses in White's camp won't be justified.

9...dxe5 10 ♟d6+ (D)

10...♟e7

This looks risky, but it is better than 10...♟f8, which leaves the h8-rook shut in. Black wants

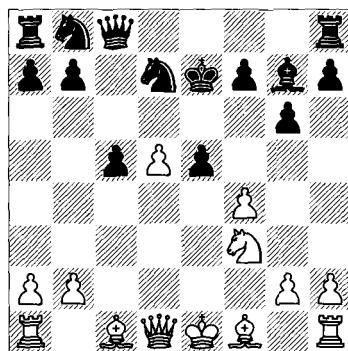
to develop this rook before putting his king into safety.

11 ♟xc8+

This exchanges a piece that has moved several times, but if 11 ♟b5, there can follow 11...♟e8 (at the cost of the exchange Black attains active play) 12 d6+ ♟f8 13 ♟c7 exf4+, and after 14 ♟xe8 ♟xe8+ 15 ♟e2 ♟e5 16 ♟xf4 ♟bc6, all the black pieces are ready to occupy active posts, with ...♟d4, ...♟f5 and ...♟d8. Perhaps it is more consistent to seek a material advantage by the untried 14 ♟e2 ♟c6 15 ♟xa8. Black has only two pawns for the rook, and it is not certain whether the a8-knight will fall. On the other hand, Black has a significant lead in development, and even Fritz signals its approval of Black's cause. In case this proves unsound, there is the alternative 11...♟a6!?, defending c7, with a good position.

11...♟xc8 12 ♟f3 (D)

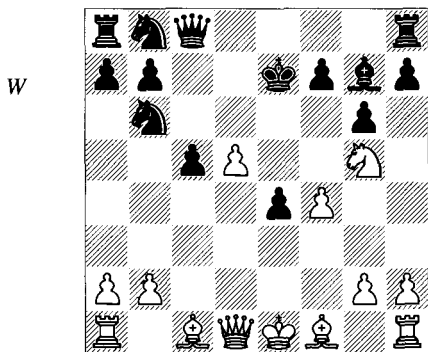
B



12...♟e8

This has been the most analysed move for many years. It is in line with the idea of putting his king into safety with ...♟f8.

Let's see another path. Watson showed his enthusiasm for the line 12...e4 13 ♖g5 ♗b6 (D), which was played by the British IM Nigel Povah three decades ago, and it seems a good solution.



Now:

a) The modest 14 ♗xe4 is not worrying because Black can regroup without problems after 14...♖d8 15 ♖e3 ♗f8 16 ♖xc5+ ♗g8.

b) 14 ♖e2 ♖d8 (14...♗d4 is Watson's suggestion) is similar to line 'a'.

c) 14 ♗b3 is met by activating the queen with 14...♗f5. Nunn analyses some lines where he shows that Black's position is already to be preferred; for instance, 15 d6+ ♗f8 16 ♖c4 (Nunn also analyses 16 g4 ♗d7 and Black ends up well) 16...h6, and White must give up material without achieving a good game. Let's have a look: 17 ♗xf7 ♗xc4 18 ♗xb7 ♗xf7 19 ♗xa8 ♗e8 20 ♗xa7 ♖d4, "with initiative", commented Nunn. With computer-testing, we can be more categorical – there seems to be no defence for White, who has his king in the centre and only the queen in play.

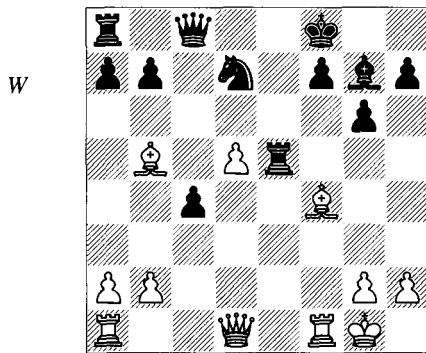
d) With 14 d6+ White prevents the h8-rook from getting into play. After 14...♗f8 15 a4 h6, in Bozinović-Cebalo, Pula 2002 the sacrifice 16 ♗xf7 was played, but it is not dangerous. There followed 16...♗xf7 17 a5 ♖d4 18 axb6 ♗c6 19 bxa7 ♗e6 20 ♖e2 ♗g7 and Black had all his pieces in play, whereas the white king in the centre was a serious problem. Watson analysed the line 16 a5 hxg5 17 axb6 a6 18 ♗d5 ♗d7! (the more complicated 18...gxf4 was successfully tried in K.Müller-Sondermann, corr. 2004) 19 fxg5 ♗c6 20 ♖b5 ♖d4, "with the idea

of playing either ...♗g7 or ...♗g4, which should favour Black". This was played in Nguyen Chi Minh-Schabanel, Issy-les-Moulineaux 2002, where there followed 21 ♖f4, and Black missed the nice tactical blow 21...♗b4!, giving him the advantage after the forced 22 ♗xd4 cxd4 23 ♖xd7 ♗d3+ 24 ♗d2 ♗xf4 – Black wins material and his pawn-structure is much superior.

13 fxe5 ♗f8

Seeking a more complicated position than the theoretical continuation which can be found in several books.

For practical purposes, I recommend memorizing just the main variation and the best move-order: 13...♗xe5!? 14 ♖b5 ♗bd7 15 ♗xe5 ♗f8! 16 0-0 ♖xe5 17 ♖f4 c4! (D).



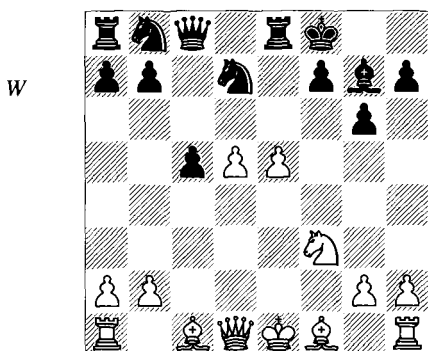
This resource was found by Kapengut more than 30 years ago. Now:

a) Not 18 ♖xd7?! ♗c5+! 19 ♗h1 ♖xd5 20 ♗g4 f5 21 ♗h3 ♖xd7 22 ♗xh7 ♗f7 23 ♖h6 ♖g8 24 ♖ae1 ♖e7 25 ♖d1 ♗e5 26 ♖f4, as in the game Shofman-Kapengut, Yaroslavl 1975, when 26...♗f6! 27 ♗h3 ♖ge8 gives Black the advantage: he is a pawn up and b2 is under threat.

b) 18 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗h1 ♗c5 20 ♖a4 ♖d8 gives Black excellent compensation thanks to his centralized pieces and a pawn for the exchange – probably two, after the fall of d5.

c) 18 ♗d4 ♖f5! 19 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♖xb2 21 ♖ab1!? ♖d4+ 22 ♗h1 ♗g7 23 g4 ♖f6 24 ♖xb7 ♗e5 25 ♖h6+ ♗xh6 26 ♖xf6 ♗xc4 27 ♖xf7 ♗g5 (27...♗d6 also leads to equality) 28 h4+!? ♗xg4! (not 28...♗xh4?? 29 ♖f4 winning, Barreras-Corzo, Sagua la Grande 1990) 29 ♖b4 ♖e8 30 ♖xc4 ♗g3 31 ♖f1 ♖e2 with a draw.

We now return to 13...♔f8 (D):



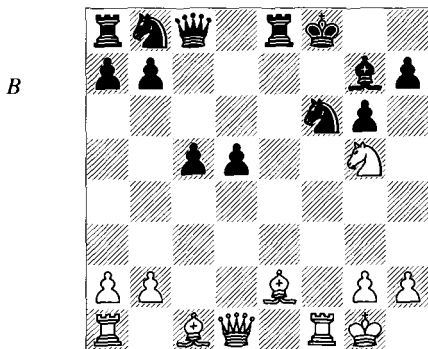
14 e6!

In line with the idea of stripping the black king naked. Worse is 14 ♖b5?! a6! 15 ♖xd7 (if 15 ♖a4, Black continues developing without any difficulty by 15...b5 16 ♖c2 ♖xe5 17 0-0 ♖bd7, with an extra pawn) 15...♖xd7 16 e6 fxe6 17 0-0 ♖g8, and Black has brought his king to safety – White's compensation for the pawn is insufficient.

14...fxe6 15 dxe6

Again the most aggressive, though not necessarily strongest. Instead, 15 d6?! leaves the pawn isolated, and despite being on the sixth rank it doesn't present any danger because Black gets hold of the central squares after 15...♖g8 16 ♖c4 ♖c6 17 0-0 ♖b6 18 ♖b3 ♖d4 19 ♖g5 ♖c6 20 ♖g4 ♖xb3 21 axb3 ♖xd6 22 ♖f4 ♖d7!, Vuković-Petrosian, Bar 1980.

15 ♖e2 exd5 (against 15...♖f6 the most incisive is to open lines with 16 0-0!; e.g., 16...♖xd5 17 ♖c4 ♖g8 18 ♖xd5 exd5 19 ♖xd5+ ♖h8 20 ♖g5) 16 0-0 ♖f6 17 ♖g5! (D) is a dangerous line.



Black has to defend carefully: 17...♖g8? loses to 18 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 19 ♖xd5+ ♖h8 (19...♖g7 20 ♖f7+ ♖h8 21 ♖xh7#) 20 ♖f7+ ♖g7 21 ♖h6+ ♖g8 22 ♖d6+ ♖e6 23 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 24 ♖c4.

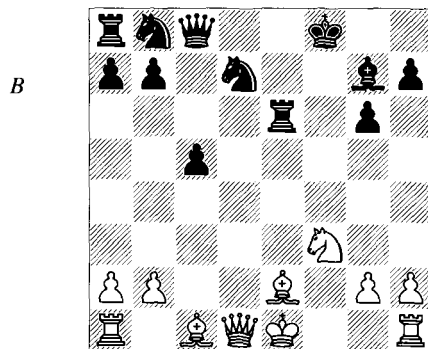
The defence of the f6-knight with 17...♖c6, played in Sobek-Hardicsay, Ostrava 1979 is also insufficient due to 18 ♖b5! ♖xb5 19 ♖xh7+ ♖g8 (19...♖e7 loses to 20 ♖g5 ♖d7 21 ♖xd5) 20 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 21 ♖xf6 ♖g7 22 ♖g5, and Black cannot defend against the threats of 23 ♖c2, 23 ♖xd5, or just bringing the major pieces to the f-file – the black king is defenceless.

The right way appears to be 17...♖d8!. After 18 ♖xh7+ ♖g8 19 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 the bishop seems to be able to defend the black king successfully. There is compensation for the pawn, but no advantage for White. If 18 ♖g4, Black gives up the exchange with 18...♖c6! 19 ♖e6+ ♖xe6 20 ♖xe6 ♖d4, for which he has two pawns. If the bishop moves back there follows 21...♖g8, and Black is doing very well. The only problem could be if the black king didn't manage to reach a safe place. Thus White must give up material by 21 ♖g4 ♖e7 22 ♖g5 ♖xe6 23 ♖ae1. The best defence is now probably 23...♖d7, when Black seems to be able to resist.

15...♖xe6+?!

This proves insufficient, as does 15...♖b6?!, which is strongly met by 16 ♖g5! (rather than 16 ♖e2 ♖xe6 {or 16...♖g8!} 17 ♖g5 ♖c6! 18 0-0+ ♖g8, with good survival chances); for example, 16...♖g8 17 ♖b5 ♖c6 18 0-0, and the black king will suffer. However, Black can justify his earlier play by the cunning 15...♖g8!, when 16 ♖e2 is met by 16...♖b6 17 0-0 ♖xe6, and most other moves by 16...♖xe6+.

16 ♖e2 (D)



Black is a pawn up, but he has problems with his king: if he could secure its safety, he could view the future with confidence. However, this is not so easy, and the sequence ♟g5 followed by $0-0(+)$ is very strong.

16...♙e8?!

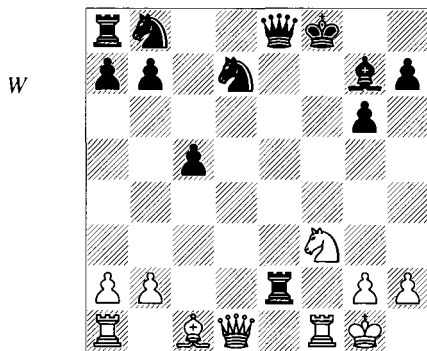
This move neither hinders White's development nor brings his king into safety, but there is no clear solution. Placing the king on g7 with $16...\text{♞f6}$ doesn't protect it very well either: after $17\ 0-0\ \text{♟g7}\ 18\ \text{♞c4}\ \text{♞e7}\ 19\ \text{♞d2!}\ \text{♟c6}\ 20\ \text{♞h6+}\ \text{♜h8}\ 21\ \text{♞g5}\ \text{♞f8}\ 22\ \text{♞h3}$ all the white pieces are in play and the pressure is very strong.

It seems most reasonable to hide the king at once with $16...\text{♞g8}$, but $17\ \text{♟g5}$ is very unpleasant, threatening the rook and intending $18\ \text{♞d5+}$. If $17...\text{♞e5}$, there follows $18\ \text{♞f4}$.

If Black tries $16...\text{♟b6}$ as before, White gets the initiative and good compensation after $17\ \text{♟g5}\ \text{♞e7}\ 18\ 0-0+\ \text{♟g8}\ 19\ \text{♞g4}\ \text{♞d4+}$ (in order to close the d-file; if $19...\text{♞c6?}$, there follows $20\ \text{♞e6+}$, winning) $20\ \text{♜h1}\ \text{♞c6}\ 21\ \text{♞b3+}$.

17 0-0! ♞xe2 (D)

If $17...\text{♟f6}$, White wins the exchange all the same with $18\ \text{♞c4}\ \text{♞e4}\ 19\ \text{♞d5}$.



18 ♞d4+ ♟g8 19 ♟xe2 ♟c6 20 ♞d2

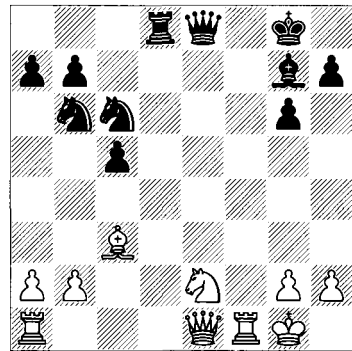
White wishes to neutralize the g7-bishop, which is a good defender, rather than winning a pawn with $20\ \text{♞b3+}\ \text{♜h8}\ 21\ \text{♞xb7}$, which would allow Black to activate his minor pieces with $21...\text{♟de5}$.

20...♟b6 21 ♞c3 ♞d8 22 ♞e1 (D)

22...♞e5

Now White will keep making progress with natural moves. From a practical point of view it was better to attempt some simplification with

B



$22...\text{♞d4!?}$, although it was possibly not enough to save the game.

23 ♞h4 ♟d5 24 ♞ad1

Once White has completed his development, the material plus begins to tell, even more so since Black hasn't solved the problems with his king.

24...♞d7 25 ♞xe5!

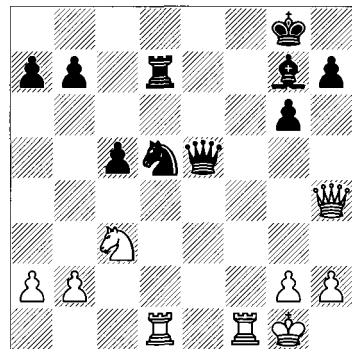
White increases his advantage by exchanging the defender of the a2-g8 diagonal.

25...♞xe5

$25...\text{♞xe5?}$ is not feasible due to $26\ \text{♞c4}$.

26 ♟c3 (D)

B



26...♟f6

It is not possible to defend the weaknesses with $26...\text{♞e3}+ 27\ \text{♜h1}\ \text{♞xc3}\ 28\ \text{bxc3}\ \text{♞e6}$ (or $28...\text{♞xc3?}\ 29\ \text{♞g4}$), because of, for instance, $29\ \text{♞f2}\ \text{♞e7}\ 30\ \text{♞f3}$.

27 ♞xd7 ♟xd7 28 ♞d8+ ♟f8 29 ♟d5 ♞d4+ 30 ♜h1 h5 31 ♟f6+ ♜h8 32 ♟d7!

Winning more material and finishing all resistance.

32...♞c4 33 ♞xf8+ ♜h7 34 h4 ♞xf8 35 ♟xf8+ ♟g8 36 ♟d7+ ♜h7 37 ♞e7+ 1-0

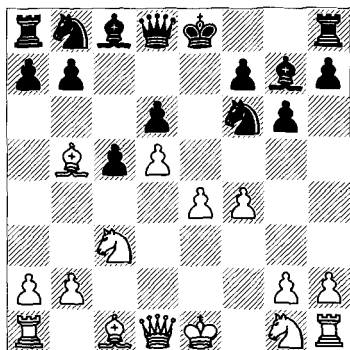
Game 12 [A67]

Evgeny Bareev – Veselin Topalov

Candidates tournament, Dortmund 2002

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 ♙b5+ (D)

B



This check characterizes the Taimanov Attack. White reckons that Black has no good way to meet the check, and that White will therefore get an improved version of a standard Four Pawns Attack. This idea has proved extremely popular and effective in practice.

8...♙f6

Parrying the check with 8...♙d7? is worse because White gets to break through with 9 e5 for nothing. 8...♙bd7?!, allowing 9 e5 and e6, leads to extremely sharp and forcing play in which Black is struggling to stay afloat.

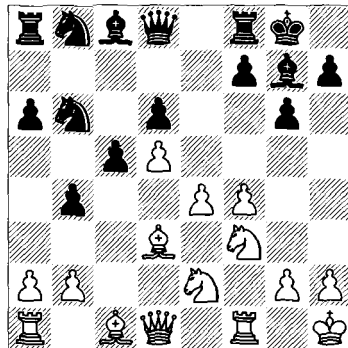
After the text-move, White argues that the knight is misplaced on d7, and gets in the way of Black's development. As we shall see, if the knight returns quickly to f6, then Black will be a tempo down compared with a Four Pawns Attack – not an attractive proposition in a line that is already sharp and critical in its standard form.

9 a4

The alternatives are 9 ♙e2 and 9 ♙d3 (and meeting a subsequent ...a6 with a4 in both cases). The text-move keeps in check Black's expansion with ...a6 and ...b5, while retaining a full set of options with the b5-bishop: in addition to e2 or d3, it might also drop back to c4 or f1, according to what Black plays.

A different concept is allowing Black's expansion by playing 9 ♘f3. There follows 9...a6 10 ♙d3 b5 11 0-0 0-0, when White has a choice of moves, although the spirit is the same – to attack the black king. Black must not advance his queenside pawns too far without a concrete reason, for pushing ...c4 in particular allows a strong d4-knight, and the c6-square suffers. Here is an example: 12 ♙h1 (a useful move, getting out of checks on the g1-a7 diagonal, and awaiting developments by Black) 12...b4 (12...♙b6 is possible, without touching the queenside pawns yet, in order to develop both the b8-knight and the c8-bishop) 13 ♘e2 ♙b6 (D) (13...♙e8 is somewhat compromising, because the f-file can end up weak).

W



White now uses a method which is common to several positions: 14 f5 (hindering the development of the c8-bishop and giving new life to the dark-squared bishop; since it concedes the e5-square, it's necessary to weigh up this move carefully because the strength of a knight on e5 would be evident) 14...♘d7 (White would welcome the opening of the position after 14...gxf5: his d3-bishop comes back to life and the black king's position is weakened, for it has few defenders; Komarov suggests 15 ♘g3!?) 15 ♙g5 and now:

a) In Komarov-Genocchio, Salsomaggiore Terme 1999 Black went wrong with 15...♙e8?

(Black puts his pieces in awkward positions so as to avoid the exchange of his important g7-bishop, but the exchange cannot be prevented anyway) 16 ♖d2 c4 17 ♙c2 b3 18 ♙b1! and White's attack was overwhelming as 18...♟c5 can be met by 19 f6!, virtually with an extra piece, or 19 ♙h6.

b) 15...♙f6! is necessary – after the exchange the queen joins the defence. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops usually favours White, who manages to get rid of an important defender of the king, but here Black has made much progress on the queenside, and has counterchances.

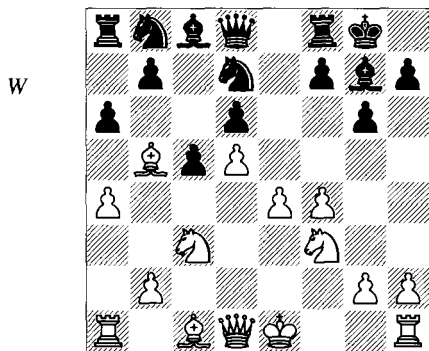
9...0-0

We shall see the main alternative, 9...♙h4+, in the next game.

10 ♟f3 ♟a6

Trying to exploit the drawback of 9 a4, which is to have weakened b4 before Black plays ...a6.

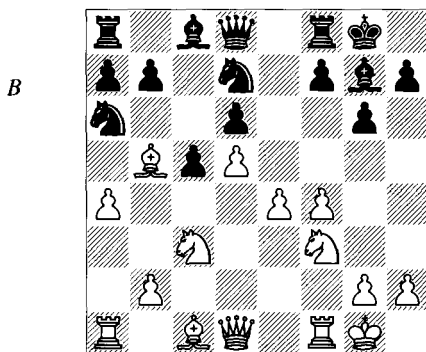
10...a6 (D) has also been played, when all retreats (to c4, d3 and e2) are possible. Let's see the development of Kasparov-Cuijpers, World Junior Ch, Dortmund 1980.



11 ♙e2 (making the e5 break easier, for the d5-pawn is defended, which doesn't happen with 11 ♙d3; that the d7-knight must move to make way for the b8-knight, thus momentarily losing control over e5, makes this idea attractive) 11...♟f6? (now the break e5 will be almost unavoidable; a normal position is reached with Black a tempo down, for White played ♙e2 in two tempi, ♙b5+ and ♙e2, and Black ...♟f6 in three tempi, ...♟f6, ...♟fd7 and ...♟f6; it was necessary to play for instance 11...♞e8! followed by ...♟f8) 12 0-0 ♞c7 (if 12...♙g4,

Kasparov points out 13 e5! ♟h5 14 ♟g5!, and the advance e6 is very strong) 13 e5 ♟e8 (White has managed to drive the black forces back, and the advance continues; the conclusion was quick) 14 e6! fxe6 15 ♙c4! ♞e7 16 dxe6 ♟c7 17 f5! ♟c6 18 ♙g5 ♙f6 19 ♟e4 ♙xg5 20 ♟fxg5 gxf5 21 ♟xd6! ♟d4 22 ♞h5 ♙xe6 23 ♞ae1 ♞f6 24 ♟xf5 ♟xf5 25 ♟xe6 ♟xe6 26 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 27 ♞xf5 ♞e8 28 ♞e1 1-0.

11 0-0 (D)



11...♟b4

11...♟c7 is also playable. Then:

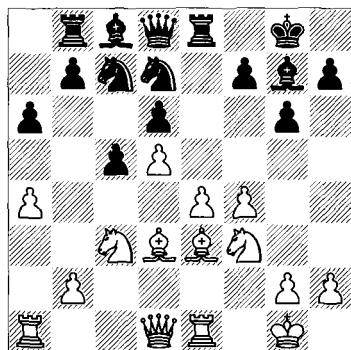
a) 12 ♙c4 is one possibility. The bishop covers d5, but is also more exposed to attack than on other squares.

b) Another idea is 12 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 13 f5, followed by 14 ♙g5, an idea that we have already come across. It originates from the famous game Kasparov-Nunn, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, and was made there under better conditions. Note that Black's remaining knight cannot access e5.

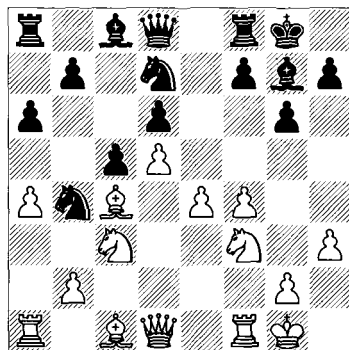
c) 12 ♙d3 is the most popular move, by which White reaches a position that can arise from the move-order 9 ♙d3, when Black doesn't have at his permanent disposal the b4-square. Let's see some instructive continuations after 12...a6 13 ♞e1 ♞e8 14 ♙e3 ♞b8 (D), when White faces a typical Benoni dilemma, viz. whether to allow ...b5:

c1) Much depends on the strength of 15 a5. Here Black is well prepared for the struggle between the weaknesses of a6 and the one on b2. Lalić-Kotsur, World Team Ch, Lucerne 1997 continued 15...b5 16 axb6 ♞xb6 17 ♞d2 ♞b4! (Black is in an ideal position to put pressure on e4, with ...♟b5 and/or ...♟f6, and gets more

W



B



profit out of the b-file than White does from the a-file; in the game White played weakly, and was crushed) 18 ♖ab1?! ♟f6 19 ♕f2 ♕g4 20 ♜g5?! h6 21 ♟f3 ♕xf3 22 gxf3 ♜h5 23 ♜a2 ♜d4! 24 ♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 25 ♖h1 ♞h4 26 ♕c4 ♜xf4, when White's king was in danger and his pieces lacked coordination.

c2) The thematic manoeuvre 15 ♕f2 seems better, when after 15...b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕h4 ♕f6 18 ♕g3!, we reach another case where the exchange of the dark-squared bishops would make Black's defence easier. Here White has forced the black bishop to an unfavourable square, in order to give strength to the e5 advance.

12 h3?!

The most usual is 12 ♖e1 a6, and here not 13 ♕c4?! because Black gets rid of his c8-bishop by 13...♟b6! 14 ♕f1 ♕g4, reaching a reasonable position, but 13 ♕f1 (the point of 12 ♖e1 – the bishop does not get in the way here, and Black cannot gain a tempo on it). For example, 13...♞e8 14 h3!, with the idea of continuing with ♕e3-f2-h4. Note that in this way White denies his opponent any straightforward way to unravel his position.

12...a6 13 ♕c4 (D)

Overprotecting d5 in order to give more strength to the e5 break.

13...f5!

Trying to weaken White's structure, especially the d5-pawn. It is risky since it weakens the e6-square. Furthermore Black also has to analyse the break e5.

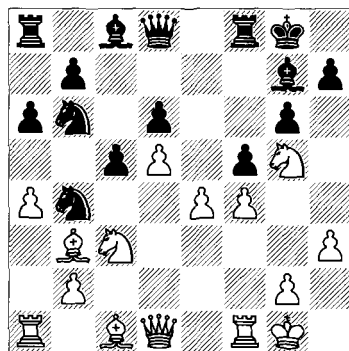
14 ♜g5

Going after the weakness on e6. The alternative is 14 e5. Since the diagonal of the g7-bishop

is closed, 14...♟b6? doesn't work due to 15 b3. After 14...dxe5! 15 d6+ ♖h8 16 ♜g5 White wins the exchange but in return Black has a pawn and the possibility of capturing another one after 16...e4 17 ♜e6 ♞f6.

14...♟b6 15 ♕b3 (D)

B



15...a5!

This move is seldom seen in the Modern Benoni. The b4-knight is stabilized and the strong threat of 16 a5, driving the b6-knight back, is prevented too. This is more flexible than 15...c4.

16 ♕e3

Against the immediate 16 ♜e6 Black has several options after 16...♕xe6 17 dxe6 c4 18 ♕c2: 18...d5 at once, to isolate and try to capture the e6-pawn, or 18...fxe4, with the idea of playing ...d5 and ...d4.

16...fxe4!?

Trying to open lines, and consistent with 13...f5. Another interesting line with similar ideas is 16...c4!? 17 ♕c2 ♞e8, followed by ...h6; for instance, 18 ♖e1 h6 19 ♜e6 ♕xe6 20 dxe6, and now the advance 20...d5!, threatening ...d4,

and favourably activating himself after 21 exd5 c6xd5 .

17 ♖h1

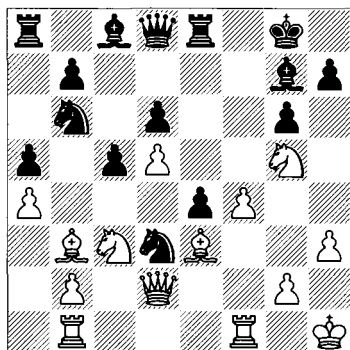
Stepping off the diagonal, so he can meet ...c4 with cxb6 .

17... ♖d3!

The b2-pawn is now another target.

18 ♖d2 ♖e8 19 ♖ab1 (D)

B



19... ♖f5

This natural developing move may be improved upon with 19... ♖e7!. In the event of 20 cxc4 c5f5! , the endgame is very favourable after 21 cxd3 cxe4 22 cxe4 cxe4 23 cxe4 cxe4 – there are weaknesses on a4, b2 and d5.

20 g4 h6! 21 gxf5

It is no good to play 21 cxc4 cxe4 22 cxe4 cxe4 23 cxd3 cxe4 24 cxe4 cxe4 , with a very favourable endgame for Black, similar to the one in the previous note.

21... ♖xg5 22 fxg5 gxf5 23 ♖xf5?!

Black will be able to defend after this natural continuation. Ftacnik suggests bringing the queen into the attack with 23 ♖e2!?

23... ♖d7! 24 ♖bf1 ♖e5!

With the fall of the h3-pawn, Black achieves a clear advantage, although it is not easy to consolidate.

25 ♖f7 ♖xh3+ 26 ♖h2

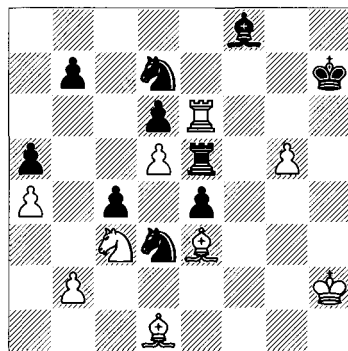
The queen exchange is forced: 26 cgl? loses to 26... cxcg5+ ! 27 cxcg5 cd4+ .

26... ♖xh2+ 27 ♖xh2 ♖f8!

The best way to defend the b7-pawn – with each simplification the importance of White's weak pawns increases.

28 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29 ♖f6 c4 30 ♖d1 ♖d7 31 ♖g6+ ♖h7 32 ♖e6 (D)

B



32... ♖7c5?!

Giving White a chance. 32... cxb2 is better, but even then Black has no clear path to victory. Exchanging on e6 gives White an annoying passed pawn, and the g5-pawn, which is hardly relevant at this moment, can become a key element, for it is passed too. By contrast Black's passed pawns are solidly under control.

33 ♖f6?!

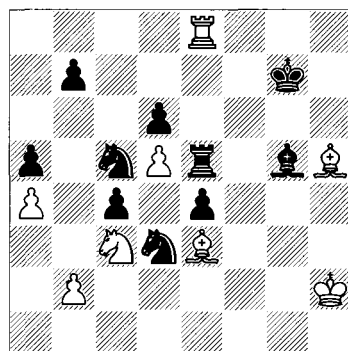
White misses his chance. Better is 33 ♖xe5! dxe5 (not, of course, 33... cxe5? because of 34 cxc5 dxc5 35 cxc4 , and the advantage changes hands) 34 cxc3 – the extra pawns are of little value, and White has good drawing chances.

33... ♖g8 34 ♖h5 ♖e7 35 ♖h6 ♖f8 36 ♖h8+ ♖g7 37 ♖e8?

After 37 ♖h6 Black still has a lot of work to do.

37... ♖xcg5! (D)

W



With the exchange sacrifice, the weakness of all of White's pawns becomes apparent.

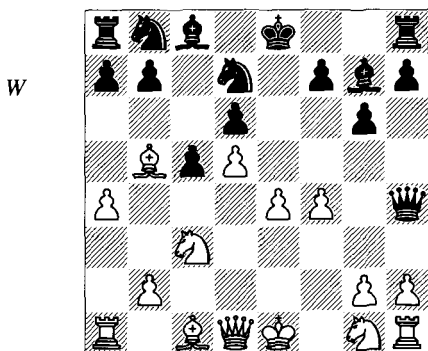
38 ♖xe5 ♖xe3! 39 ♖e7+ ♖f6 40 ♖f7+ ♖g5 41 ♖d1 ♖d4 42 ♖g2 ♖xb2 43 ♖b5 ♖e5 44 ♖c2 ♖bd3 45 ♖f1 ♖b4 46 ♖b1 ♖xd5 0-1

Game 13 [A67]

Evgeny Bareev – Boris Gelfand

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 ♙b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 ♚h4+ (D)



After this check Black will ‘lose’ two tempi, but the move 10 g3 cannot be considered a won tempo – it is not a useful move. Furthermore the kingside light squares are weakened, and the frequent and annoying idea of transferring the dark-squared bishop to the kingside with ♙e3-f2-h4 or ♙d2-e1-h4 won’t be at White’s disposal.

This idea is recommended by John Watson’s in his essential book *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*.

10 g3 ♚d8

An even more paradoxical move, returning the queen to its original square. A more obvious choice is 10... ♚e7, and while this has been more popular in practice, it isn’t clear which queen retreat is objectively superior.

The move 10... ♚e7 has in its favour the fact that it is a developing move controlling e5 with an extra piece, besides putting pressure on the e4-pawn with the possible capture ... ♙xc3 and ... ♚xe4.

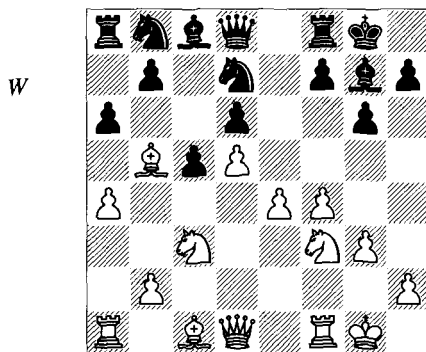
The negative side of ... ♚e7 is that this last threat, of capturing the pawn by exchanging the g7-bishop, can hardly ever be carried out due to the weakness of the king’s position. A further problem of ... ♚e7 is that after the break e5, the capture ... dxe5 is met by d6 with tempo.

The good thing about ... ♚d8 is that it indirectly puts pressure on the d5-pawn and stops the break e5. Furthermore the queen has at its disposal the a5-, b6- and c7-squares on the queenside.

For the moment we can say that choosing between 10... ♚e7 and 10... ♚d8 is a matter of taste.

11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 a6 (D)

It is also possible to play 12... ♘a6 and ... ♘b4, although this hasn’t had much success.



13 ♙c4

Overprotecting d5 in order to play e5 quickly. The main alternative is 13 ♙d3, when Black must give more space to his b8-knight with 13... ♘f6. Then:

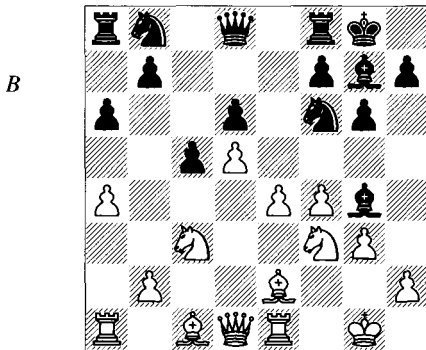
a) 14 ♘g2 ♙g4 15 h3 ♙xf3+ 16 ♚xf3 ♘bd7 is acceptable for Black. Now:

a1) Timoshchenko-Pigusov, USSR Army Ch, Tashkent 1987 continued 17 ♙e3 ♚a5 18 ♙ae1 ♙ae8 19 ♙e2 ♚b4, with a reasonable position. Note that the white queen and rook, lined up on the f-file, forced Black to keep his king’s rook defending f7 – moving it away would increase the strength of the advance e5, and such a decision must be taken with great care.

a2) Black played more carelessly in Krush-Goletiani, Chicago 2006: 17 ♙d2!? (hindering ... ♚a5) 17... ♙e8?! (17... ♚c7 18 b3 ♙ae8, followed by ... ♙e7 and ... ♙fe8, is worth considering) 18 ♙ae1 ♙c8 19 b3 ♘b6? 20 e5! dxe5 21

fxe5 ♖fxd5, and here I don't understand why White failed to play 22 ♜xf7+! ♕h8 23 ♜e4!, with the threat of 24 ♜d6, and also of leaving the black pieces without coordination after 24 a5, and besides b7 is attacked.

b) Another logical possibility is 14 ♜e1, in order to be able to play e5 quickly. There follows 14...♙g4 15 ♙e2 (D).

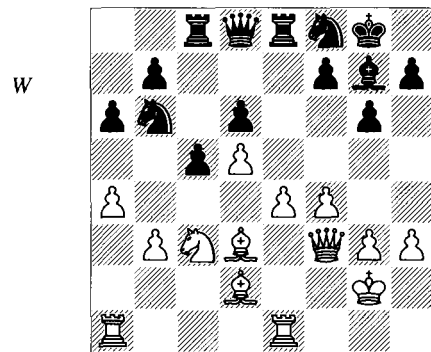


Here Black cannot play 15...♜bd7?! due to the break 16 e5!. Best seems 15...♜e8!, intending 16...♜bd7, and if White decides to prevent this with 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♜fd7, the position is double-edged – there is no clear way to continue with the central expansion. In the game Palo-de Firmian, Copenhagen 2001, Black chose 15...♜fd7?!, losing another tempo. White should have replied 16 ♙f1! with the idea of h3. Instead he played 16 ♜d2?!. As Romanian GM Marin points out, this is a mistaken exchange: generally, with g3 already played White must try to retain the light-squared bishops because of the several weaknesses he has on that colour. There followed 16...♙xe2 17 ♜xe2 ♜e8 18 ♜c4 ♜b6 19 ♜a3 ♙d4+ 20 ♕h1 ♜8d7 21 ♜d3 ♜f6, and the white pieces lacked coordination. This time the won-and-lost-tempi duel favours Black. After 22 a5 ♜bd7 23 ♜c2 ♙xc3 (exchanging the bishop is not perilous here due to White's lack of development) 24 bxc3 c4! (look out for this thematic sacrifice, opening the c-file and providing the d7-knight with the c5-square; in this case the sacrifice is temporary) 25 ♜xc4 ♜c8 26 ♜d3 ♜c5 27 ♜f3 ♜xe4, Black had the advantage.

c) Watson profusely analyses the line 14 ♜b3 ♙h3 15 ♜e1 ♜g4!, as played in Garcia

Martinez-Pigusov, Moscow 1987, leading to complications that are satisfactory to Black.

Another idea, unsuccessfully tried in Sarkar-de Firmian, Monticello 2005, is to place the d7-knight on f8: 13...♜e8 14 ♜e1 ♜f8 15 ♕g2 ♙g4 16 h3 ♙xf3+ 17 ♜xf3 ♜bd7 18 ♙d2 ♜c8 19 b3 ♜b6 (D).



With 20 a5!, White gets an ideal position. The advance a5 must be carefully evaluated: it works as containment, but the pawn needs to be defended, and we know the dangers of surrendering the b5-square. In this case the drawbacks are not important. White can keep making progress, whereas Black cannot undertake anything active. There followed 20...♜a8 21 ♙c4, and Black had no good response: ...b5 loses a pawn without getting anything in return, whereas White can choose between preparing e5, or exploiting the paralysing strength of a5 to reinforce his position. After 21...♜c7 22 ♜a2 ♜d7 23 ♜d3 ♜b8 24 ♜a4 the move 24...♙d4?! made White's plan easier – 25 b4! was carried out under excellent conditions.

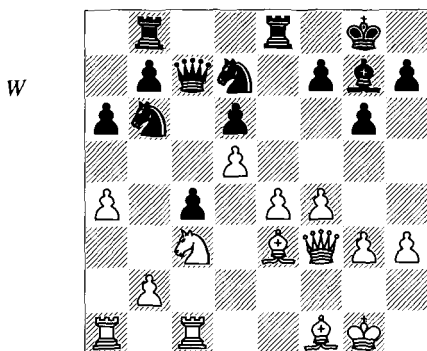
13...♜b6

We already know that it is essential for Black to develop his c8-bishop in order to have space.

14 ♙e2

14 ♙d3 ♙g4 15 ♜e1 ♜8d7 is also playable. White can now continue 16 ♙f1 in order to get rid of the pin without exchanging the light-squared bishops. Black's lost tempi make this move feasible. In Krush-Christiansen, Internet 2003 there followed 16...♜e8 17 h3 ♙xf3 18 ♜xf3 ♜c7 (Black can also play the natural moves 18...♜f6 19 ♙d2 ♜bd7 first) 19 ♙e3 (19 a5 is premature, for after 19...♜c8 Black

threatens 20...c4 followed by ...b5; for instance, 20 ♖e3 c4 21 ♜ec1 b5 22 axb6 ♜cxb6, and Black plans ...♜c5 with a good position; if 23 ♜a5, then 23...♜c5 24 ♖xc5 ♜d7! is interesting) 19...c4 (a logical move, but here it fails: after 19...♜f6 followed by ...♜bd7, Black's position is satisfactory) 20 ♜ec1 (targeting the awkward position of black queen and the advanced c4-pawn) 20...♜ab8 (D).



White now has 21 a5! ♜c8 22 ♜a4, when Black's position falters: 22...b5 is forced, and after 23 axb6 ♜cxb6 24 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 there are several attractive continuations. The direct 25 ♜xa6 ♖xb2 26 ♜c2 seems adequate. Instead 21 ♜d1?! was played in the game. The threat of 22 a5 is deadly but after the forced 21...a5!, Black's position on the queenside is strengthened, not even the weakness of b5 being worrying. There followed 22 ♜h2 ♜bc8 23 ♜a3 ♜d8 24 ♜c2 ♜c5 (justifying his previous play) 25 ♖xc4 ♜xe4 26 ♖b5 f5, with a very good position for Black.

Against 14 ♖a2, which is consistent with 13 ♖c4, Watson points out the possibility of 14...♖g4 15 a5 ♜c8. This move is also carried out in other lines, keeping d7 for the other knight. The knight can either support the break ...b5 or head for b5 via a7. After the unpin 16 ♜b3 there follows 16...♜xa5 17 ♜xb7 ♜b6 18 ♖d2 ♖xf3 19 ♜xf3 ♜8d7, with a good position – the black queen can become active via b4, and the white queen will at least give the black pieces time to place themselves actively.

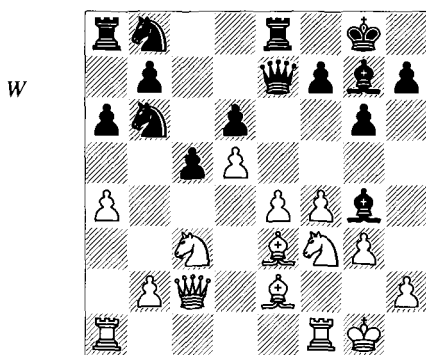
14...♖g4 15 ♖e3

After 15 ♜g5 ♖xe2 16 ♜xe2, instead of 16...♜e7 (Olafsson-Psakhis, Moscow 1989),

Black can play in the usual way: 16...♜8d7 17 ♖d2 ♜e8, reaching a normal position.

15...♜e8 16 ♜c2 ♜e7 (D)

This move is the most active, the threat being 17...♖xc3 followed by 18...♜xe4. The most natural move is 16...♜8d7, with a good position, while the direct 16...♖xc3 is obviously risky, but may be playable; for instance, 17 bxc3 ♜xe4 18 ♜g5 (not 18 ♜xe4? due to 18...♖f5) 18...♖xe2 19 ♜xe4 ♖xf1, and it is not clear whether White's initiative adequately compensates for the pawn.



17 e5!

The e-pawn was virtually lost in any case. With this thematic sacrifice White weakens Black's structure and gets a dangerous passed pawn. 17 a5? is wrong because of the typical combination 17...♖xc3 18 ♜xc3 ♜xd5! 19 exd5 ♜xe3+, as played in Laine-Paavilainen, Helsinki 1990.

17...♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xf3 19 ♜xf3 ♜8d7

Black prefers to take with the knight on e5, for his coordination after 19...♜xe5 20 ♜d1 is worse – White has compensation thanks to his passed pawn.

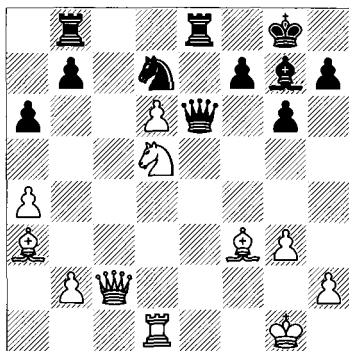
20 d6 ♜e6 21 ♜d1 ♜xe5 22 ♖xc5!

A forced exchange sacrifice, with which White keeps his strong passed pawn. After the disappearance of the c5-pawn, White regains control of the vital d4-square.

22...♜bd7 23 ♖a3 ♜xf3+ 24 ♖xf3 ♜ab8 25 ♜d5 (D)

Although the analysis engines don't quite agree, White's compensation is reasonable – there are no open files, and the d6-pawn is very strong.

B



25...♙h8 26 ♖g2 ♜ed8 27 ♘c7 ♜f6 28 ♜f1
 ♜e5 29 ♜f2 h5 30 ♜b3 ♜f8 31 ♜e2 ♜d4 32
 ♜d5 ♜xa4 33 ♜e7 ♘f6 34 ♜d3 ♜bd8 35
 ♙xb7 ♘d7 36 ♜xa6 ♜g4 37 ♙f3 ♜g5 38
 ♜b5 ♘e5 39 ♜e2

White already has a pawn for the exchange,
 and Black's rooks remain passive.

39...h4 40 ♙b4!?

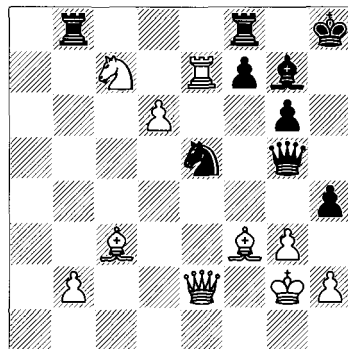
Having accomplished its mission of support-
 ing the passed pawn, the bishop becomes active
 on the long diagonal. White reckons that a draw
 is a satisfactory result.

40...♜b8?!

It is possible to win back the pawn with
 40...♘xf3 41 ♜xf3 hxg3 42 hxg3 ♙xb2, but af-
 ter 43 ♙c3+ ♙xc3 44 ♜xc3+ ♙g8 45 ♘e6!,
 Black must give perpetual check.

41 ♙c3 (D)

B



Now only White can seek to win, but Bareev
 only needed a draw to win the mini-match.

41...h3+ 42 ♙xh3

42 ♙f2! is a better winning try because
 42...♘xf3 43 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7? doesn't work due
 to 44 ♘e6+.

42...♜f5+ 43 ♙g2 ♘xf3 44 ♜xf3 ♜xf3+ 45
 ♙xf3 ♙xc3 46 bxc3 ♜fd8 47 ♜xf7

It is more ambitious to keep the passed pawn
 with 47 d7 but White preferred greater clarity.

47...♜xd6 48 ♙g4 ♙g8 49 ♜f4 ♜c8 50 ♘b5
 ♜d2 51 h4 ♙g7 52 c4 ♜d3 53 ♘d4 ♙h6 54
 ♘f3 ♜c5 55 ♜e4 ♜c3 56 ♘e5 ♜a5 57 ♙f4 ♜a1
 58 ♘g4+ ♙g7 59 ♘e3 ♜a7 60 ♘d5 ♜b3 61 g4
 1/2-1/2

Game 14 [A68]

Miso Cebalo – Andrei Schekachev

Biel 2003

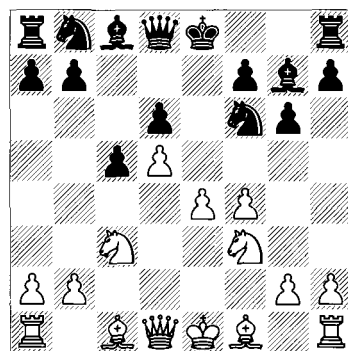
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 ♘f3 (D)

This move brings about the basic position of
 the Benoni Four Pawns.

8...0-0 9 ♙e2

This position is more often reached via the
 King's Indian move-order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3
 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8
 ♙e2 exd5 9 cxd5. The fact that the same position
 can be reached from both openings may attract
 players who are happy with White's chances,
 though of course there are several possible de-
 viations for both sides along the way.

B



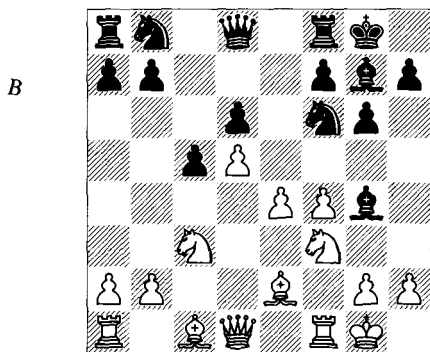
9...♙g4

As is common in the Modern Benoni, exchanging this bishop assists Black's mobilization, besides removing an important supporter of White's e5 break.

The alternatives are the sharp 9...b5, 9...♖e8, and 9...♗bd7 (the last of these recommended by Watson in his book), allowing the advance 10 e5. All three of these lines require a deep knowledge of forced variations. The text-move leads to more 'rational' positions, where understanding general ideas and themes is more important, and I shall therefore focus upon it in this book.

10 0-0 (D)

The impetuous 10 e5 is here less dangerous. After, for instance, 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♗fd7 13 e6 ♗e5 14 exf7+ ♖xf7 15 0-0 ♗bd7 Black has developed all his pieces with a good command of the centre and the passed pawn on d5 can be easily controlled.



10...♗bd7

This is the most natural developing move. The alternatives for Black are 10...♖e8 and even 10...♗xf3.

Black's queenside majority must start rolling with the advance ...b5, generally prepared by ...a6, although it is also possible with the help of the typical manoeuvre ...♗e8-c7 and ...♖b8.

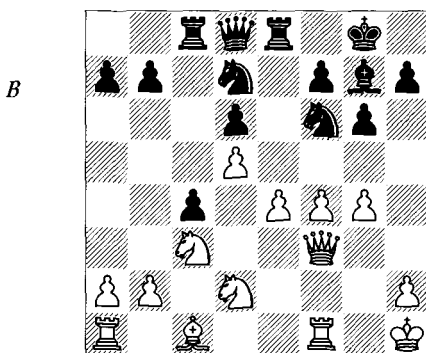
Another idea is to put pressure on e4 with ...♖e8, which contributes to stopping the e5 break. This pressure on e4 can be increased with the plan of ...c4 followed by ...♗c5, which also allows the regrouping of the f6-knight to d7.

With these ideas in mind, 10...♗fd7 is playable, stopping the e5 break and planning to

develop the b8-knight via a6 and then ...♗c7. Furthermore, moving the f6-knight allows the counter ...f5: if this manages to neutralize White's central majority, it is worth considering.

11 ♖e1

Useful to support a future e5. Let's see a duel of the ideas mentioned in the previous note: 11 ♗d2 ♗xe2 12 ♖xe2 ♖e8 (as noted, this puts pressure on e4 and stops e5; let's not forget that it also leaves f7 unprotected) 13 ♖f3 ♖c8 (seeking to play ...c4 and ...♗c5) 14 ♖h1 (this prophylactic move is almost always useful: it rules out the resource of a timely check on the g1-a7 diagonal; if 14 ♗c4 or 14 ♗b5, there follows 14...♗b6, with good play) 14...c4 15 g4 (D).



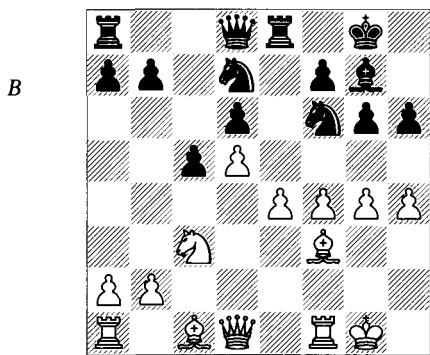
After this aggressive thrust, White is ready to advance with either e5 or g5. 15...♗c5? (the standard reaction is 15...h6!, and if White insists with 16 h4, 16...♗c5 is possible, when 17 e5? is wrong due to 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♖xe5! 19 ♗xc4 ♗xg4!, threatening ...♖xh4+; e.g., 20 ♖xg4 ♖h5 21 ♖g2 ♖xh4, followed by ...♖xc4) 16 e5! (note that White's offensive is effective even with four of his pieces on the queenside) 16...dxe5 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♗xc4 (Nogueiras-Cvitan, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990) threatening both 19 ♗xe5 and 19 g5. If 18...♖e7, there follows the annoying pin 19 ♗g5, and after 19...♗cd7 20 ♗d6 ♗e5 21 ♖g2!, Black has problems; if 21...♖xd6 or 21...♖xc3, White replies 22 ♗xf6.

Another useful move is 11 a4 (stopping ...b5) 11...♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♖a5 14 ♗e3 c4 15 ♗d4 (the pressure on the e-file hinders the

advance 15 g4?! ♖c5 16 ♖c2 ♜e7 17 g5?, because of 17...♜fxe4! 18 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 19 ♙xe4 ♜ae8) 15...♜e7 (15...♜c5 16 e5 is unclear, and therefore Black increases the pressure on e4) 16 ♖h1 a6 17 g4 ♜ae8 18 g5 ♜xe4 (this was the idea) 19 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 20 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 21 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 22 ♖f3 f5!, and Black has good compensation – a pawn for the exchange, and White's weaknesses on b2 and d5, Peev-Velimirotić, Sofia 1972.

The most often played line is 11 h3 ♙xf3 12 ♙xf3. Then:

a) After 12...♜e8, let's have a look at the immediate pawn-storm 13 g4 h6 14 h4 (D).

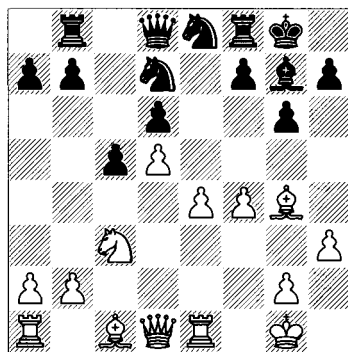


The advance g5 is inevitable, but Black can show that the white king is also exposed with 14...h5!. After 15 gxh5 ♜xh5 16 ♙xh5, Vaïsser found 16...♖xh4! (based on the fact that it is not possible to keep the piece with 17 ♙g4 due to 17...♙xc3! (e.g., 18 bxc3 ♖g3+ 19 ♖h1 ♙g7! and mate). Therefore 15 g5 is necessary, and the pressure on e4 allows 15...♜g4 16 ♙xg4 hxg4 17 ♖xg4 ♙xc3 18 bxc3 ♜xe4 19 ♙d2 ♖e7 20 ♜ae1 ♜b6, and White's structure is worse, but the black king is poorly defended – Black's chances seem somewhat better.

b) 12...♜b8 (the idea is clear: to play ...b5) 13 ♜e1 ♜e8 (not 13...b5? because of 14 e5) and now a natural line is 14 a4 a6 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♜xb6, with a standard type of position. White played instead 14 ♙g4?! (D) in Monin-Schekachev, St Petersburg 1994.

He is ready to answer 14...b5 with 15 e5! dxe5 16 ♙xd7, followed by 17 fxe5, but Black has 14...f5!, and after 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♙e2 a6 17 ♙d3 ♜c7! (controlling e6 and supporting

B



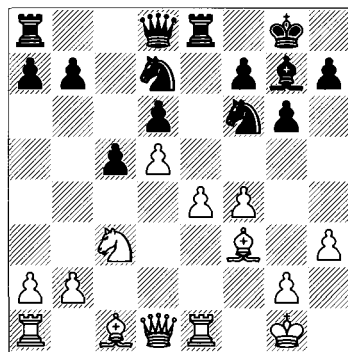
...b5; the typical manoeuvre ...♜b5-d4 will eventually be possible) 18 ♖c2 ♖f6 (threatening ...c4, leaving d5 weak and with all the black pieces in a harmonious position), we can see that the break ...f5 was carried out in good circumstances.

11...♜e8

Controlling e5. There's no time for 11...a6? because White can break through with 12 e5!, but 11...♜e8 is playable.

12 h3 ♙xf3 13 ♙xf3 (D)

B



13...♖a5 14 ♙e3

Stopping ...b5 with 14 a4 isn't useful any more. With ...♖a5 played instead of ...a6, the queen supports a future ...♜c5 after 14...c4!, and the weaknesses of b3 and d3 begin to tell. Now 15 ♙e3 ♜c5 16 ♙xc5 ♖xc5+ 17 ♖h1 gives time for 17...♜d7!, controlling e5.

14...b5 15 a3

Keeping the knight on c3 – this is essential to support the central formation.

15...b4

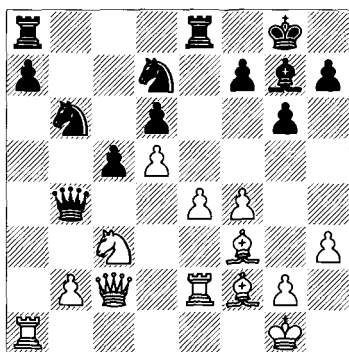
15...♜ab8 and 15...♜ac8 are alternatives, but the most usual continuation is 15...♜b6,

heading for c4, leading to great complications after 16 ♙f2 , or 16 $\text{e5} \text{ ♜c4}$ 17 $\text{exf6} \text{ ♜xe3}$ 18 $\text{♜xe3} \text{ ♜xe3}$ 19 $\text{fxg7} \text{ ♜ae8}$ 20 f5 .

16 $\text{axb4} \text{ ♜xb4}$ 17 $\text{♞c2} \text{ ♜b6}$

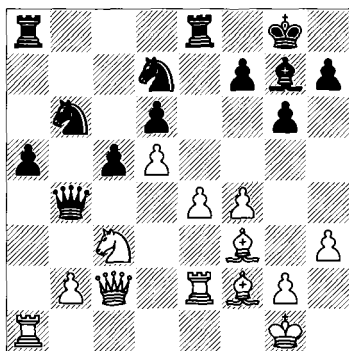
Black regroupes his knights, exploiting the fact that e5 is not possible.

18 $\text{♙f2} \text{ ♜fd7}$ 19 ♜e2 (D)



19... a5 (D)

The exchange of dark-squared bishops by 19... $\text{♙d4}!$? weakens the position of Black's king but he also wins some squares for the queen and the knights. Since in this case the weakness of the king is not easily exploitable, the idea is interesting; e.g., 20 $\text{♙h1} \text{ ♙xf2}$ 21 $\text{♞xf2} \text{ c4}$ 22 $\text{♜e2} \text{ a5}$ 23 $\text{♙g4} \text{ ♜c5}!$ (consistent with 21...c4) 24 $\text{e5?} \text{ ♜d3}$ 25 $\text{♜e4} \text{ ♜xf4}$ 26 $\text{♜f6+} \text{ ♙g7}$ 27 $\text{♜xe8+} \text{ ♜xe8}$ 28 $\text{♜f2} \text{ dxe5}$, with a big advantage (two pawns for the exchange and d5 is weak), Cebalo-Kristić, Velika Gorica 2002.



20 $\text{♙a4} \text{ ♜eb8}$ 21 $\text{e5?}!$

Defending against the threat of 21... ♜xa4 followed by the capture on b2, but the tactical duel will be unfavourable. 21 $\text{♙g4}!$? is preferable.

21... ♞xf4 22 $\text{♜e4} \text{ ♞g5}$ 23 $\text{exd6} \text{ ♜e5}!$

The b2-pawn won't go anywhere.

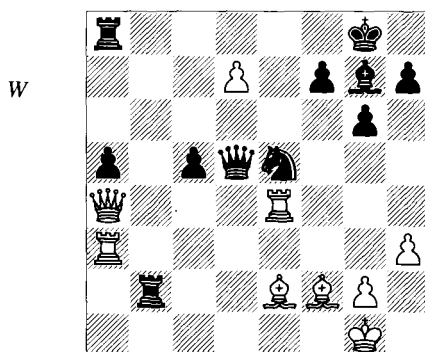
24 $\text{♜a3} \text{ ♜xa4}$ 25 ♞xa4

If 25 ♜exa4 , besides 25... ♞xb2 26 $\text{♞xc5} \text{ ♜ab8}$, trying to exploit the weakness of White's first two ranks, there can also follow 25...c4.

25... ♞xb2 26 $\text{d7} \text{ ♞d2}!$

Winning material, although the position is still complex.

27 $\text{♙e2} \text{ ♞xd5}$ (D)



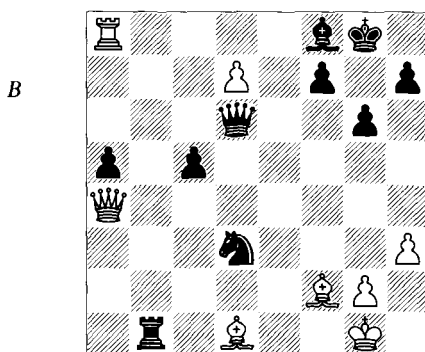
28 $\text{♜d3}!$?

Keeping the position complicated.

28... ♜xd3 29 $\text{♜e8+} \text{ ♙f8}$ 30 ♙f3?

White's only chance is 30 ♙xd3 , when after 30... $\text{♞b4}!$ (30... $\text{♞ab8?}!$ 31 ♙e4) he needs to find the flashy 31 $\text{♙c4}!$ (Black wins after both 31 $\text{♞c2?} \text{ ♞bb8}$, and 31 $\text{♞a2?}! \text{ ♞xd3}!$ {not 31... ♞xa2? 32 ♜xa8 } 32 $\text{♜xa8} \text{ ♞d1+}!$ 33 $\text{♙h2} \text{ ♞xd7}$) although he still faces an uphill struggle after 31... ♞d6 32 $\text{♙xf7+} \text{ ♙xf7}$ 33 $\text{♞a2+} \text{ c4}$ 34 $\text{♜xa8} \text{ ♙e7}$.

30... ♞d6 31 $\text{♜xa8} \text{ ♞b1+}$ 32 ♙d1 (D)



32... $\text{♙b2}!$

“The calm after the storm” – once the game is simplified, Black will impose his material plus.

33 d8 ♖ ♗xd8 34 ♖xd8 ♖xa4 35 ♖h2 ♖b6 36 ♖c2

Or 36 ♖xc5 ♖xd1 37 ♖xf8+ ♖g7.

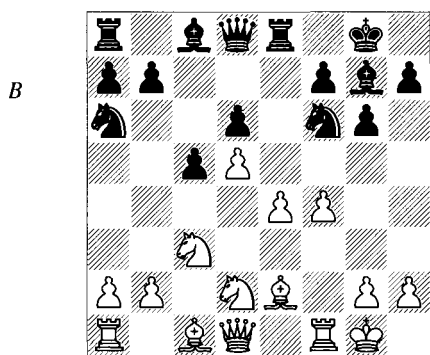
36...♖b2 37 ♖xc5 ♖d7! 38 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 39 ♖e4 ♖b5 40 ♖a8 ♖g7 41 ♖a7 ♖c5 42 ♖b1 ♖e6 43 ♖a2 ♖c7 0-1

Game 15 [A69]

Viktorija Cmilyte – Katerina Lahno

North Urals Cup (women), Krasnoturinsk 2006

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖c3 g6 7 e4 ♖g7 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8 10 ♖d2 ♖a6 11 f4 (D)



White is nearly ready to break with e5, but she doesn't rule out the idea of playing ♖c4, giving extra support to the advance e5, hitting d6, etc., although in order to do this the e4-pawn must first be protected.

11...♖b8

Black's plan is also clear – to prepare ...b5 – and for that, as we have already seen in similar lines, several moves are usually needed, such as ...♖c7, ...♖b8, ...a6 and ...b5, or ...a6, ...b6, and eventually ...b5 – the move-order depends on what White does.

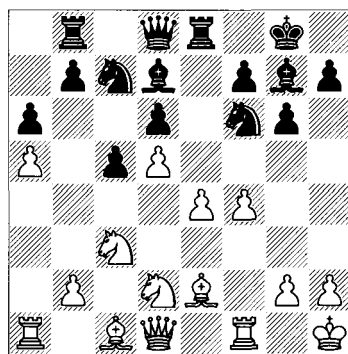
The alternative is to continue with the 'mandatory' move 11...♖c7.

12 a4?!

White presents Black with an alternative destination for the a6-knight. It is better to wait for ...♖c7 before playing a4.

With this in mind, 12 ♖h1 was played in Vaïsser-Ibragimov, Berne 1992. This move is often useful but here it is not the most incisive. There followed 12...♖c7 13 a4 a6 14 a5 ♖d7 (D).

W

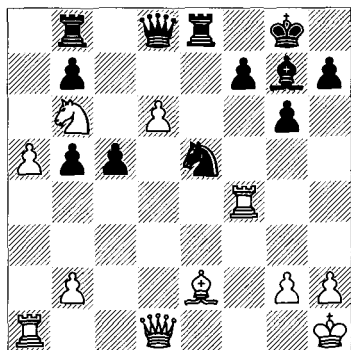


Black is ready for the standard manoeuvre ...♖b5-d4. After 15 ♖f3 ♖b5, Ufimtsev-Tal, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1967 continued 16 e5, but the sacrifice was convincingly refuted by 16...dxe5 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♖c4 ♖f5 19 ♖e3 ♖f4 20 ♖e2 ♖h4! 21 g3 ♖e4!, giving up the exchange after weakening the light squares, with a strong initiative. 16 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 17 ♖e1 is no better: White can only dream about the break e5, whereas Black can make progress by improving his pieces: 17...c4! 18 ♖a3 ♖c8 19 ♖f1 ♖d7, and the knight heads for d3, Toth-de Firmian, Biel 1986.

Given that a quieter course is not satisfactory, White took another path in Vaïsser-Ibragimov, Berne 1992: 15 e5!? dxe5 16 ♖c4 ♖b5 17 d6 ♖e6 18 fxe5 ♖d7 19 ♖f4 ♖xf4 20 ♖xf4 ♖xe5 (after the fall of this pawn, the experiment has failed, but the passed d-pawn still gives practical chances) 21 ♖xb5 axb5 22 ♖b6 (D).

The game continued 22...c4?! ('public enemy number 1' could have been eliminated with the line pointed out by Vaïsser: 22...♖e6 23 d7 ♖c7! 24 ♖xb5 ♖xd7! 25 ♖d5 ♖e5) 23 ♖d5 ♖e6 24 ♖d1 ♖d3 25 ♖xd3 cxd3? (leaving

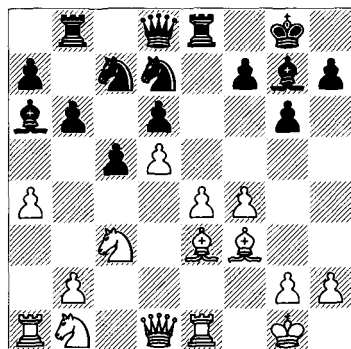
B



the passed pawn alive; 25...♖xd6 or 25...♗xd6 26 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 27 ♕e2 ♖xd1+ 28 ♕xd1 ♕xb2 is satisfactory) 26 d7, and, quoting Vaïsser, “Black can do nothing to oppose the terrible passed pawn”.

The most useful waiting move is 12 ♖e1 according to the expert in this line, Anatoli Vaïsser. There can follow 12...♖c7 13 a4 b6 14 ♕f3 (protecting e4 in order to follow up with ♖c4; the other defence of the pawn, with 14 ♗c2, allows 14...♖g4!, when after 15 ♕xg4 ♕d4+ 16 ♖h1 ♕xg4 17 ♖c4 f5!, Black is doing very well; if 15 ♖f3, there can follow 15...f5, and we see that White’s lack of development prevents him from having the e5 advance ready, which favours Black’s counter ...f5) 14...♕a6 15 ♖db1 (to develop the c1-bishop; if 15 ♖f1, there can follow 15...♕xf1 16 ♖xf1 a6) 15...♖d7 16 ♕e3 (D) (another idea is 16 ♖a3).

B



16...f5! (16...c4 is also interesting, intending ...♖c5-d3, and if 17 ♕d4, it is possible to keep the bishops without loss of time with 17...♕h6 followed by ...♖c5) 17 ♖d2 (the lack of communication prevents 17 exf5? due to 17...♖xe3!

18 ♖xe3 ♕d4, followed by ...♗f6, with a strong initiative) and here instead of 17...♖f6?!, allowing White to weaken Black’s structure with 18 exf5 gxf5 19 ♗c2 (Mikhalchishin-Ki.Georgiev, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999), 17...♕d3! is much better, once again preventing 18 exf5? due to 18...♖xe3!, which now is winning.

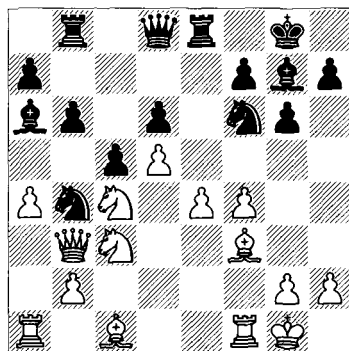
12...♖b4

It is true that from b4 the knight doesn’t support ...b5, but the possibility of invading d3 or c2 makes this destination a very profitable one.

13 ♖a3

Not the sort of move one wants to make when playing f4, but White needs to control d3 before becoming active. In Rubinetti-Ra.Garcia, Buenos Aires 1964, the continuation was 13 ♕f3 b6 14 ♖c4 ♕a6 15 ♗b3 (D).

B



There followed an already familiar manoeuvre to increase the pressure on White’s e4-pawn: 15...♖b7. Now it was necessary to continue with the natural 16 ♕d2, and 17 ♖ae1, but White played 16 g3?, without sensing the danger, and Black achieved complete success with 16...♖be7 17 ♕d2 ♖xe4! 18 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♖xe4, and White’s position proved untenable.

13...b6

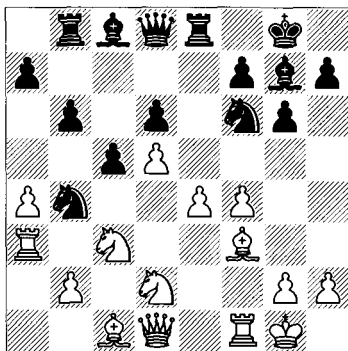
No need to rush – since White isn’t threatening anything, there is no reason to play 13...a6, allowing 14 a5.

14 ♕f3 (D)

14...a6

Lahno was not satisfied with this standard move. According to her it was better to play 14...♕a6 15 ♖b5 ♗d7, when she prefers Black’s

B



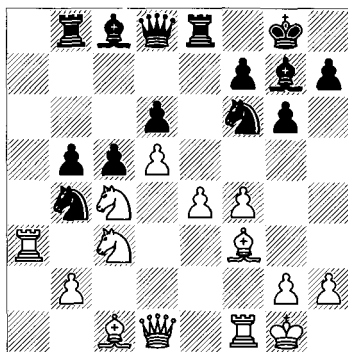
chances. Nevertheless, in this position White has a free hand and can continue with 16 g4.

15 ♖c4

Now the break ...b5 allows ♖a5, but this cannot be avoided.

15...b5 16 axb5 axb5 (D)

W



17 ♖a5

Not only settling on c6 but also threatening 18 e5.

17...♞b6

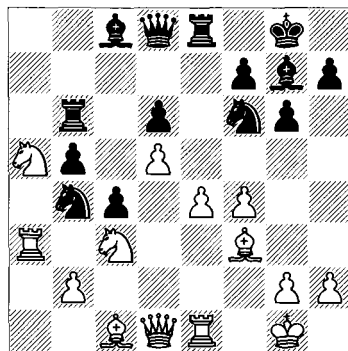
Besides controlling c6, Black plans a future ...♞a6. The alternative was 17...♞c7 although the possibility 18 e5 dxe5 19 d6 had to be evaluated. After 19...♞b6 20 fxe5 ♞xe5 21 ♕f4 ♞e6 Black appears to get good compensation for the exchange.

18 ♞e1

Still preparing e5. Lahno suggested the sacrifice 18 e5!?, e.g., 18...dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖d7 20 e6 ♕d4+ 21 ♕h1 fxe6 22 ♖c6 ♖xc6 23 dxc6 ♖e5 24 ♖e4 ♖xc6 25 ♕g5 followed by ♖f6+, although it is not clear whether there is enough compensation for the two pawns.

18...c4 (D)

W



The threat of ...♖d3 requires urgent measures.

19 ♖a2!

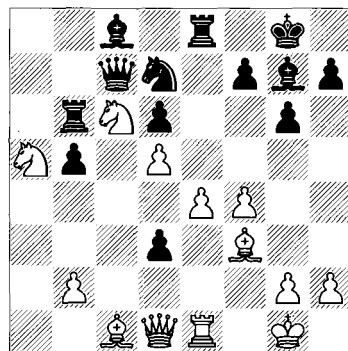
White rises to the occasion. Unsatisfactory were 19 e5? ♖d3! 20 ♖c6 (or 20 ♞e3 dxe5) 20...♞xc6 21 dxc6 b4, and 19 ♕e3? ♖d3 20 ♞e2 ♖g4!, when Black is almost winning.

19...♖d3 20 ♞xd3! cxd3 21 ♖b4 ♖d7

Seeking to become active at some point with ...f5. Lahno suggested 21...♞c7, momentarily leaving d7 free for the bishop, which would be useful in case of 22 ♖bc6?! ♞a6 23 b4 ♕d7!, and 24 ♞xd3? is not possible due to 24...♖xd5!. The game would have continued 22 ♖ac6, with adequate compensation for the exchange.

22 ♖bc6 ♞c7 (D)

W



23 ♞xd3?!

The pawn cannot escape, so it is better first to prevent Black from getting good squares for her pieces with 23 b4!. Dvoretzky recommends always asking oneself what the opponent is going to do before taking a decision – this is a good example.

23...b4!

Not only does the knight settle on an unsailable position but the c8-bishop too has the splendid f1-a6 diagonal – all a result of White failing to play 23 b4!. The d3-square will be a succulent target for the c5-knight.

24 ♖c2

Threatening 25 ♘e7+, and keeping the tension. In time-trouble it was difficult to make the decision to go for the complications deriving from 24 e5!.

24...♗c5 25 ♘c4 b3 26 ♖d1 ♘a6!

In case of 26...♙a6 there would follow 27 e5!, when the exchange doesn't count, whereas the central extra pawn does.

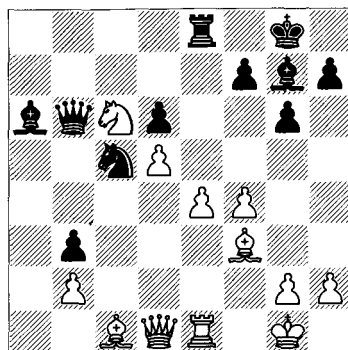
27 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 (D)

28 e5?!

The black pieces will now become even more active. 28 ♘e3 seems necessary, although after 28...♘xb2 29 ♖d2 ♘g7 30 e5 ♘d3!?, the passed pawn is difficult to control.

28...♘d3+ 29 ♘e3 ♖c7 30 ♘d4

W



After 30 ♙e2 dxe5 31 ♖xb3 e4, White's position is also difficult.

30...♗xe1 31 ♖xe1 ♘b7!

The strength of the central pawns diminishes and little by little the exchange begins to tell.

32 ♖b4 ♘xc6 33 ♘b6 ♖c8 34 dxc6 dxe5 35 fxe5 ♘xe5 36 ♘g4?

Time-trouble.

36...♖xc6 37 ♘e3 ♘d6 38 ♖d2 ♗xe3! 0-1

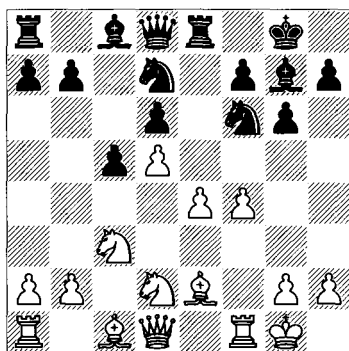
Game 16 [A69]

Pavel Tregubov – Aleksandr Poluliakhov

Krasnodar 2001

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♘g7 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♙e8 10 ♘d2 ♘bd7 11 f4 (D)

B



We have another version of the Four Pawns Attack via the Classical Variation. White wins space, and if he manages to reinforce his position without trouble, Black will have serious problems due to a lack of mobility. After f4

there is no ...♘e5, which is normal in the Classical Variation with ...♘bd7. Also, from d7 the knight cannot directly support the ...b5 advance. On the other hand, White has made a move, ♘d2, which doesn't help his development and this will force him to waste another tempo so that the c1-bishop and the a1-rook can get into play.

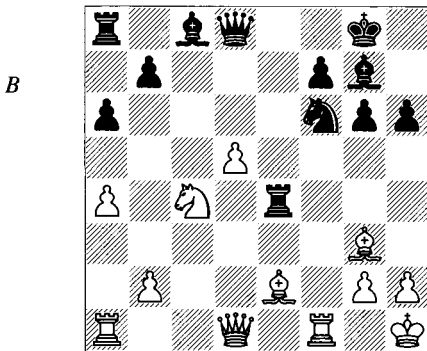
Black's next move exploits White's temporarily sluggish development. It is almost forced but is enough to get counterplay.

11...c4!

By this temporary pawn sacrifice Black solves his mobility problems and puts strong pressure on White's only assailable point, the e4-pawn.

It is also possible to play 11...a6 12 a4 first, and only then 12...c4. Who benefits from the inclusion of these moves? Sometimes the answer to this sort of question isn't clear, for they lead to similar positions. In this case this is not so:

13 ♖h1 (the game develops as in one of the main lines without ...a6 and a4, as we shall see later on) 13...♟c5 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♜xe5 16 ♟xc4 ♜e8 17 ♙g5 h6 18 ♙h4 ♟ce4 and now Yrjölä-Vaïsser, Sochi 1984 featured 19 ♟xe4 ♜xe4 20 ♙g3 (D).



At this point the best move, without 11...a6 12 a4, is 20...♜xd5. However, here this move loses to 21 ♟b6. The game continued 20...♟xd5 21 ♜xf7! ♙e6 (if 21...♟xf7, there follows 22 ♟d6+, whereas neither 21...♜xe2 22 ♜xg7+ ♟xg7 23 ♜xe2 nor 21...♙xb2 22 ♟xb2 ♟xf7 23 ♙f3 ♙f5 24 ♜b3, gives any hope) 22 ♜xb7 ♟h8 23 ♜c2 ♙f5 24 ♟d6 ♜e7 25 ♜c6! 1-0.

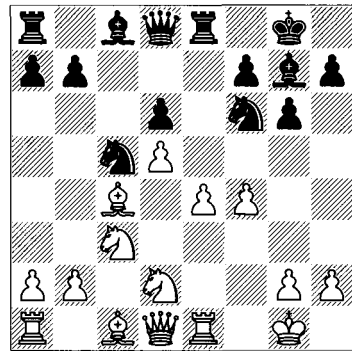
Thus we see that the weakness on b6 can become very serious. Beliavsky-Velimirović, Moscow Interzonal 1982 is another example where this weakness becomes apparent: 19 d6 g5 (Dorfman points out the line 19...♟xc3 20 bxc3 g5 21 ♙f2 ♟e4 22 ♙b6 ♟xc3 23 ♜d3 ♜d7 24 ♙h5 ♜f8 25 ♙d4!, winning, since the c3-knight has no escape) 20 ♙e1 ♙e6 21 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 22 ♙a5 ♙xc4? (an unsound sacrifice, but after 22...♜d7 23 ♙c7, White has an obvious advantage: the threat of 24 ♟b6 is very strong) 23 ♙xd8 ♙xe2 24 d7! ♜e6 25 ♜xe2 1-0.

12 ♖h1

The usefulness of getting off the open g1-a7 diagonal was shown by Pihlajasalo-I.Zaitsev, Jyväskylä 1994: 12 ♙xc4 ♟c5 13 ♜e1? (D) (better is 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♜xe5 15 ♟f3 ♜e8 16 ♖h1 ♟fe4 17 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 18 ♜b3 ♟d6, with even chances).

Black played 13...♟g4!, and 14 ♟f3 doesn't work due to 14...♜b6!, when surprisingly there is no defence; what White played didn't improve

B

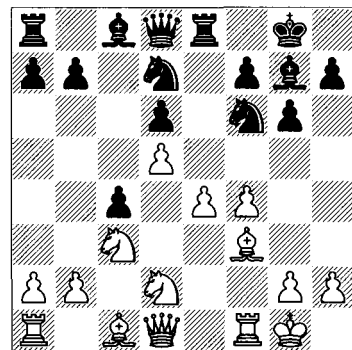


things: 14 e5 ♟d3!, and White suffered decisive material losses.

12 e5 dxe5 13 ♟xc4 is not very promising either, due to 13...♟b6! 14 fxe5 (advancing the passed pawn is not worrying: after 14 d6 ♟xc4 15 ♙xc4 ♜b6+ 16 ♖h1 e4, the d6-pawn is under control and can become a weakness) 14...♟fxd5 15 ♟xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♜xd5 ♟xd5 17 ♙f3, and Black can choose between capturing the e5-pawn with 17...♟b6, and the more solid 17...♙e6.

The ambitious but passive 12 ♙f3 (D) also allows Black to exploit the open dark-square diagonal.

B



Pomar-Fischer, Havana Olympiad 1966 continued 12...b5! (the pawn is untouchable because of the check on b6) 13 ♖h1 a6 (the white pieces have ended up bogged down, while Black threatens ...♟c5-d3) 14 a4 ♜b8 15 axb5 axb5 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♟de4 ♟xe4 18 ♟xe4 ♟f6, and there is no compensation for the pawn.

The main alternative is 12 a4. There can follow 12...♟c5 13 ♙f3 (or 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♟xc4, after which Black can choose between the solid

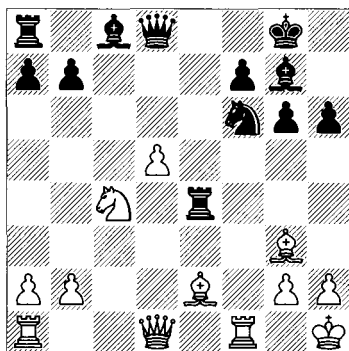
better, due to the passed pawn, if he had played
21 ♖e2 ♜xf1+ 22 ♜xf1 ♕xe2 23 ♜xe2.

16 ♖g5 h6 17 ♖h4 ♖ce4 18 ♖xe4

18 d6 is an alternative deserving study.

18...♜xe4 19 ♖g3 (D)

B



19...♖g4?!

An old example shows that it is satisfactory for Black to accept the offer: 19...♜xd5! was played in Chandler-Sax, Sarajevo 1985. There followed 20 ♜xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♖f3 ♜d4 22 ♜ad1 and after 22...♖b6 23 ♜xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♜d1 ♖f6 25 b3 ♖xc4 26 bxc4 a5, and a draw was agreed: White's pressure compensates for the pawn. 22...♖b4!? is an attractive alternative, suggested by A.Schneider and supported by computer checking. After 23 ♜xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♜d1 ♖f6 25 a3 ♖c6, winning back the pawn by 26 ♖xc6 bxc6 27 ♜d6 ♖e6! 28 ♖xc6 ♜d8 allows Black the edge because of his two bishops.

20 ♖xg4 ♜xg4

In case of 20...♜xc4 21 ♖f3, the d-pawn supported by the bishop-pair gives White the advantage.

21 ♜xf6!

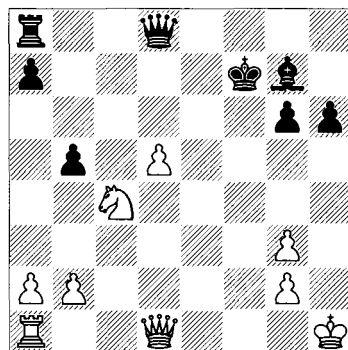
There follows a series of desperadoes, after which White gets the advantage.

21...♜xg3

If 21...♜xc4, then 22 ♜xf7 ♖xf7 23 ♜f1+.

22 ♜xf7 ♖xf7 23 hxg3 b5? (D)

W



Losing a decisive tempo and opening the h1-a8 diagonal, which will be bad for Black since the threat against the c4-knight will be parried. It was necessary to play the prophylactic retreat 23...♖g8!, when there is still a long struggle ahead.

24 d6!

As we have seen in other positions of the Modern Benoni, the passed d-pawn can quickly become decisively strong.

24...♜g8

In case of 24...bxc4, there follows 25 ♜d5+ ♖f8 26 ♜f1+ ♖f6 27 ♜xf6+! ♜xf6 28 ♜xa8+ ♖f7 29 d7, and the advanced pawn is unstoppable.

25 ♜d5+ ♖h7 26 ♖e5 ♜g5

By giving up the exchange to get rid of the passed pawn, Black tries to obtain practical chances, although with careful play White should impose his material advantage without much trouble.

27 ♜xa8 ♜h5+ 28 ♖g1 ♜xe5 29 ♜xa7 ♜xd6 30 ♖f1 ♜e5 31 ♜f2 ♜h5 32 ♖g1 ♜g4 33 ♖f1 ♜c4+

Presumably this phase was played in mutual time-trouble. Once White reached the time-control at move 40, Black resigned.

34 ♜e2 ♜c7 35 ♜xb5 ♜xg3 36 ♜c4 ♜e5 37 ♜d1 ♜xb2 38 a4 ♜b6 39 ♜e4 ♜c7 40 ♜d5 1-0

Summary

In Game 11 Black wanted to sidestep the theoretical lines, but his king remained in the centre for a long time, a fact that White convincingly exploited after one inaccuracy by Black. The aggressive 14 e6! opened up extremely dangerous attacking possibilities.

Game 12 is a clear example of the break ...f5 carried out under good circumstances: 13...f5! managed to isolate the d5-pawn, and the drawback of weakening e6 was comfortably neutralized.

The notes to White's 9th move in Game 12 feature an idea that is possible in several positions: the f5 advance, limiting the scope of the c8-bishop and giving life to White's dark-squared bishop, in exchange for surrendering the e5-square. There we see the uncommon case where the exchange of the dark-squared bishops with 15...♖f6! is good for Black, since the black king is not under a strong attack and Black has already gained ground on the queenside.

The destructive potential of White's formation was clearly seen in Kasparov-Cuijpers, World Junior Ch, Dortmund 1980, quoted on Black's 10th move, where one single error, 11...♜f6?, was enough for Black to be overwhelmed with the break e5.

On Black's 11th move we dealt with White's motif of playing a5, to stop ...b5. Each case must be analysed on its own particular merits. In Lalić-Kotsur, World Team Ch, Lucerne 1997 Black achieved good play on the b-file, and that activity was more important than the weakness on a6. In Sarkar-de Firmian, Monticello 2005 (note to White's 13th move in Game 13) we saw the opposite case: there 21 a5! was very strong, as it could have been in Krush-Christiansen, Internet 2003 given on White's 14th move of Game 13.

Game 13's 9...♖h4+ has the idea of weakening White's light squares, and in both the main game, with 13...♜b6, and in the notes to White's 13th move, with 13...♜f6, from Timoshchenko-Pigusov, USSR Army Ch, Tashkent 1987, Black developed his c8-bishop and achieved a reasonable game.

In Game 14 Black's counter ...f5 is a resource to bear in mind: it was successful in Monin-Schekachev, St Petersburg 1994, quoted on White's 11th move. Earlier in that note we also saw that the bayonet attack (g4) must be carefully prepared, as ...h5! is sometimes a highly effective reply.

Generally, the exchange of dark-squared bishops favours White, but on Black's 19th move of Game 14, we see an exception: in Cebalo-Kristić, Velika Gorica 2002, Black initiated the exchange himself by 19...♖d4. The reason is that Black takes control of the squares that are left unprotected by the exchange.

Game 15 provides further examples of how important the move-order can be. One must combine the advancement of our plans with the hindering of the opponent's. The hasty 12 a4?! gave Black some useful options: in the notes we see that White's restraining 14 a5 is met by the useful exploitation of the b5-square with ...♜b5 in Ufimtsev-Tal, USSR Spartakiad, Moscow 1967, whereas in Toth-de Firmian, Biel 1986 Black was able to play 17...c4!, and then ...♜d7, heading for d3.

We also see a situation where the counter 16...f5! is adequate in Mikhachishin-Ki.Georgiev, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999.

The strength of White's passed pawn on d5 or d6 can decide the course of the struggle, as in Vaïsser-Ibragimov, Berne 1992, quoted on White's 12th move of Game 15, and also in Game 16, with 24 d6!.

In Game 16 Black counterattacks with the pseudo-sacrifice 11...c4! before White strengthens his position and asphyxiates him. The open diagonal and the c5-square provide enough counterplay.

On White's 12th move the importance of a timely ♖h1, stepping off the open g1-a7 diagonal, can be seen in Pihlajasalo-I.Zaitsev, Jyväskylä 1994 after the violent 14...♜d3!, and more subtly in Pomar-Fischer, Havana Olympiad 1966, with 12...b5!.

In the note to Black's 15th move, in Lin Ta-Sun Qinan, Chinese Ch 1987, we see another case where the exchange of the g7-bishop favours White, with 19 ♖d4!.

5 Knaak and Kapengut Variations

After the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♕d3 ♕g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 we reach the basic position of the Knaak Variation, one of the most dangerous attacking lines against the Modern Benoni. The placement of the knight on the modest e2-square is deceptive. White's idea is to place his pieces in a very aggressive manner: after f4 (with h3 to control g4), the e2-knight goes to g3, the queen to f3, and White is ready for the pawn-breaks e5 and/or f5.

Game 17 followed a long theoretical line: Black played ...♘bd7, ...c4 and ...♘c5, and White broke through with e5 and obtained a strong initiative. Alternative plans for both sides are analysed.

In **Game 18** Black swapped the light-squared bishops, which diminishes the strength of White's attack. Nevertheless White managed to break through successfully on e5 all the same. A piece sacrifice against the weakened position of Black's king gave White a strong offensive.

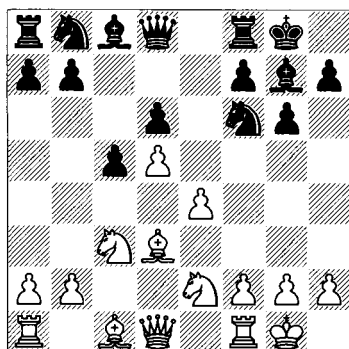
Game 19 brings us to the Kapengut Variation, reached after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3. It had a brief time of popularity in the 1970s thanks especially to Viktor Korchnoi, but is uncommon in its original form in current practice. However, it often arises nowadays by transposition from the King's Indian Defence, in such forms as 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♕g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♕e3 c5 7 ♘ge2 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e5 9 ♘g3 e6 10 ♕e2 exd5 11 cxd5.

Game 17 [A65]

Ralf Åkesson – Igor Nataf Stockholm 2003/4

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 e4 g6 7 ♕d3 ♕g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 (D)

B



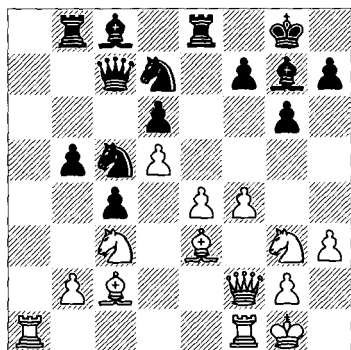
This is the basic position of what we shall call the Knaak Variation, in recognition of the

efforts of the German GM in discovering many of its important details.

Let's see a famous position (*see diagram on following page*) where White has achieved an ideal situation, after Black's 18th move (the intervening moves being 9...a6 10 a4 ♖c7 11 h3 ♘bd7 12 f4 ♜e8 13 ♘g3 c4 14 ♕c2 ♘c5 15 ♖f3 ♘fd7 16 ♕e3 b5 17 axb5 ♜b8 18 ♖f2 axb5).

Black threatens 19...b4, driving the c3-knight away from the centre, but it is White's turn. He has all his pieces ideally placed. The pressure on the f-file suggests that 19 f5 is played in order to open it up, but Black can defend by placing a strong knight on e5. Penrose hit upon the right sequence: 19 e5!! dxe5 20 f5 (this manoeuvre has become standard – White momentarily

W

**Penrose – Tal***Leipzig Olympiad 1960*

neutralizes both the d7-knight, by taking away its strong square, and the g7-bishop, by closing its diagonal; the plan is to open the f-file at the right time, although the advance f6 is also to be considered) 20...♔b7 (the threat of fxg6 and ♖f7+ prevents Black from defending with the typical counter ...e4, giving life to both the d7-knight and the g7-bishop) 21 ♜ad1 ♔a8?! (giving up the e5-pawn is better) 22 ♛ce4 (the extra control of e4 which the g3-knight provides is one of the virtues of the line: White can keep a strong blockader) 22...♛a4?! (this makes White's task easier) 23 ♔xa4 bxa4 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 ♖f7+ ♗h8 26 ♛c5, and White wins material – he threatens the d7-knight and 27 ♛e6. The British master didn't give the then World Champion any chance.

We shall now return to the position after White's 9th move.

9...♞e8 (D)

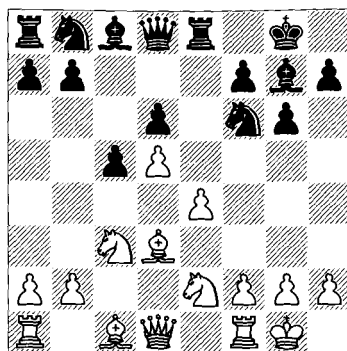
Black can play in several ways, involving both ...♛a6-c7 and ...♛bd7. In the latter case he can more easily find a good destination for the d7-knight for it is possible to play ...c4 and ...♛c5, after ...♞c7, and with gain of time against the d3-bishop, which makes a quick ...b5 easier.

Let's note that the e5- and c4-squares are not under control yet, which suggests the paradoxical move 9...♛g4, an idea of the inventive Hungarian IM Perenyi.

Black has several other options too, some which can transpose to the main line we are looking at, such as 9...♛bd7 or 9...a6. Also,

9...♔d7 (threatening 10...b5), 9...♛a6 and 9...b6 have been played.

W

**10 ♛g3**

White continues with the set-up mentioned in the introduction. 10 h3 is another way of reaching the main position. Control of g4 is important: for instance if 10 f4?!, then Black has 10...c4!. The exchange of pawns, opening up the position, is good for Black because White's centre disappears, and because f4 has weakened White's position. After 11 ♔c2 there follows 11...♛g4, with the threat of 12...♞b6+ winning the exchange, or ...f5, eliminating White's centre.

10...♛bd7

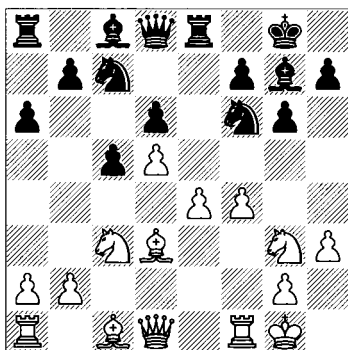
Again Black has to choose how to develop his knight. One possibility is the typical idea of speeding up the advance ...b5 with 10...♛a6 11 h3 ♛c7. Now:

a) 12 a4 is not necessary, as Black was not yet threatening ...b5. Besides being able to play 12...a6, in order to follow with ...♞b8 and ...b5, Black can occupy b4 with 12...♛a6!? 13 f4 ♛b4 14 ♔b1 b6. The placement of the knight on b4 is annoying, but one has to evaluate in each case whether it is useful or if it just ends up out of play. The a1-rook can enter the game along the third rank with ♜a3, switching to the kingside at an appropriate moment.

b) 12 f4 a6 (D).

Now after 13 a4 ♞b8 14 ♖f3 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 another virtue of the manoeuvre ...♛a6-c7 can be seen, namely the fact that it puts pressure on d5. Black gets good play with 17...♛fxd5. As in many positions derived from ...♛a6-c7, the absence of a black

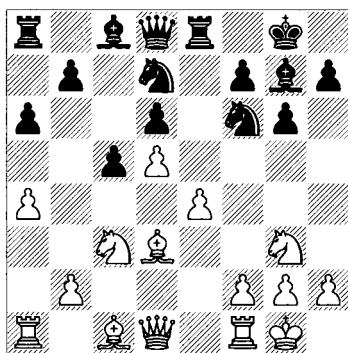
W



knight that can go to e5 may prompt 13 f5, opening the diagonal of the c1-bishop, threatening ♖f3, ♕g5, etc.,. However, in this case Black can regroup with 13...♟d7!, followed by ...♟e5 and ...b5, when the g3-knight becomes ineffective.

11 a4 a6 (D)

B



12 f4

Many transpositions are possible. The move most often used is 12 h3, when 12...♖c7 13 f4 c4 14 ♕c2 ♟c5 15 ♖f3 should be compared with the main line. Let's see a different treatment of the position: Pinter-Kasparov, French Team Ch, Auxerre 1993 continued 12...♖b8 13 a5 h5 (pay attention to this manoeuvre, also common in other lines where there is a knight on g3: Black tries to drive back the knight, so as to make it lose control of both e4 and f5) 14 ♕g5 (another possibility pointed out by Pinter is 14 ♖e1 h4 15 ♟f1 ♟h7 16 ♟e3, regaining control of f5, and with access to c4) 14...b5! 15 axb6 ♖xb6 16 ♖a2 ♟e5 17 ♕c2 (Pinter notes that 17 ♕c2?! is wrong because it loses control of c4) 17...♟h7 18 ♕e3 h4! 19 ♟h1 g5! (preventing

f4) 20 ♖d2 (White didn't like 20 f4 gxf4 21 ♕xf4 ♟f8, followed by ...♟fg6, when Black's minor pieces have good squares) 20...♖d8 21 ♖c2 ♟f8 (heading for g6) 22 ♖c1 ♕f6 23 f3 ♟fg6 24 ♟f2 ♖b6 25 ♖d1! ♟f4 26 ♕f1 ♟h5 27 ♖c2 ♟g3 28 b3 ♖e7. Here White improved his position with the manoeuvre 29 ♟b1!, relocating his inactive knight. After 29...♟g6 30 ♟d2 ♟f4 31 ♟c4, White gained the advantage.

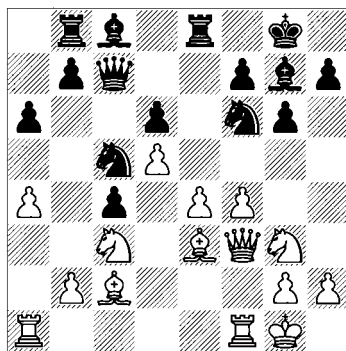
12...♖b8 13 ♖f3 ♖c7 14 ♕e3

This move is more accurate than 14 h3, when there would follow 14...c4 15 ♕c2 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕e3, because the typical combination 17 e5 dxe5 18 f5 is not possible, due to 18...♕b7, threatening 19...b4, and White cannot set up a strong blockade on e4. Nataf recommends 18...♖f8, which is good but perhaps not best. In any case it is a move to consider in similar positions.

14...c4 15 ♕c2 ♟c5 (D)

The immediate 15...b5?! is a bad idea due to 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a7! ♖d8 18 ♟ge2!, heading for c6, which cannot be stopped by 18...b4 because of the elegant 19 ♟d4!.

W



16 h3

Necessary: if 16 e5?!, Black has 16...♟g4!, when White cannot make progress.

16...b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 e5!

Forced. Sometimes being brave is the only option. Both sides have made progress with their plans. The critical moment is approaching.

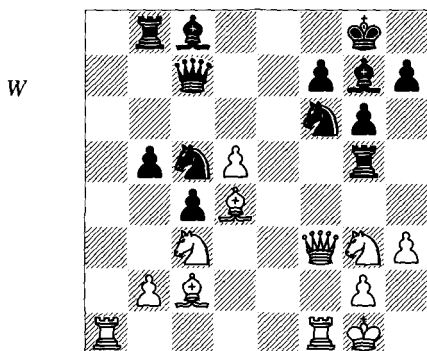
18...dxe5 19 fxe5

Again 19 f5 is harmless because White does not have enough control over e4, and so Black can play the strong 19...e4!.

19...♖xe5 20 ♔d4!

Without losing control of the f-file. Against 20 ♔f4?!, rather than 20...b4, Kapengut's recommendation of giving up the exchange by 20...♕fd7! seems best. After 21 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖e3 f5! 23 ♕fd1 ♖d6 24 ♖a7 ♔d7!, Black controls the whole board.

20...♖g5 (D)



21 ♕ge2!

The careless 21 ♕ge4? is bad because of 21...♕xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♕xe4! 23 ♕xg7 ♕xh3!, winning.

21...♕f5

This is still theory, and the text-move is recommended by Kapengut. 21...♕cd7?! is unsatisfactory due to the *zwischenzug* 22 d6! ♖xd6? 23 ♕e4!. The continuation recommended by Watson in *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni* is 21...♕h5!?. However, I am not entirely convinced of its solidity. Having said that, Black holds after 22 ♕xg7?! ♕xg7 23 d6 ♖xd6 24 ♖xf7+ ♕h6! 25 ♖ad1 ♕d3!, which is the sequence analysed by Watson, and which is OK for Black. In Ramirez-Rinaldi, corr. 2002 there followed 26 ♕e4 ♖b6+ 27 ♕h2 ♖f5 28 ♖e7 ♖e6 29 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 30 ♕d4 ♖xf1 31 ♖xf1 ♕d5 32 ♕c3 ♖d8 33 ♕dxb5 ♕xb2 34 ♕e4 ♕g8 35 g4 ♕g7 36 h4 ♕e6 37 ♕d5 ♕g7 38 ♖a1 ♕c5 39 ♕c7 ♕f7 40 ♖f1 ♕xd5 41 ♕e8+?? ♖xe8 0-1.

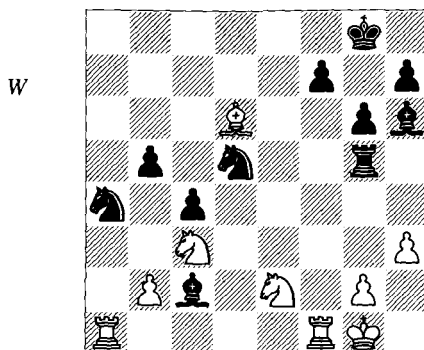
22 ♖e3!

Better than 22 ♕e3 ♖h5! 23 ♕f4 ♖b6!, and the complications are satisfactory for Black after, for instance, 24 ♕xb8 ♕b3+ 25 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 26 ♕xf2 ♕xa1 27 ♖xa1 ♕xc2 28 ♖a8 h6 29 ♕g3 ♖xd5!.

22...♕h6 23 ♖e5 ♖xe5 24 ♕xe5 ♕xc2 25 ♕xb8 ♕xd5 26 ♕d6!!

All this had been played before, and is profusely analysed by Nataf in *Informator 91*. Previously, 26 ♕f4 had been played.

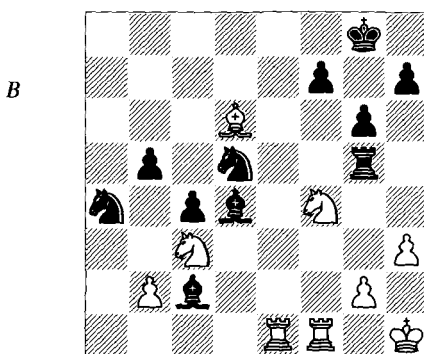
26...♕a4! (D)



27 ♖ae1! ♕g7 28 ♕f4?!

Here White missed the advantageous 28 h4!, pointed out by Nataf. Then both 28...♖xg2+ 29 ♕xg2 ♕e3+ 30 ♕f3 ♕xf1 31 ♖xf1 ♕xb2 and 28...♖h5 29 g4 ♖xh4 30 ♕xd5 ♖xg4+ 31 ♕g3 ♕d4+ 32 ♕g2 are good for White.

28...♕d4+ 29 ♕h1 (D)



29...♕e3?

Black returns the favour: with 29...♕f6! 30 ♖e7! (30 ♕fd5 ♖xd5 31 ♕xd5 ♕e4! is even better for Black because being two exchanges down is less important than the two passed pawns that he could have obtained) 30...♕xc3 31 bxc3 ♕xc3 32 ♖b7 h5 33 ♖b8+ ♕h7 34 ♖b7 ♕ce4 35 ♖xf7+ ♕g8 36 ♖f8+ he could have forced White to take a draw.

30 ♖f3! ♕xc3 31 bxc3 ♕e4 1-0

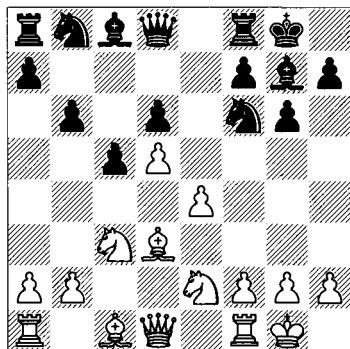
Game 18 [A65]

Alex Yermolinsky – Alexander Shabalov

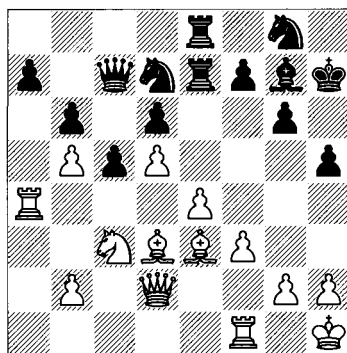
Foxwoods 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 b6 (D)

W



W



Black tries to exchange his light-squared bishop, which very often hinders his communications.

10 ♘g3

White chooses not to stop Black's idea. There are several alternatives; for instance, 10 ♗g5 is possible.

10 a4 is a further idea, and we shall look at several examples of it:

a) The main idea of White's a-pawn advance is to neutralize 10...♗a6?! with 11 ♘b5!, now possible because the knight is doubly protected. In Knaak-Kl.Müller, Frankfurt 1977, Black got rid of the annoying intruder after 11...♘bd7 12 ♘ec3 ♗xb5?! 13 axb5 ♗e8, but his position had deteriorated in the process: he has a weakness on a7, while White has a free hand to make progress in the centre and kingside. There followed 14 f3 h6 15 ♗e3 ♗c7 16 ♗d2 ♗h7 17 ♗a4 ♗e7 18 ♗h1 ♗ae8 19 ♗g1 h5 20 ♗e3 ♘g8 (D).

White has everything ready to advance on the kingside: 21 f4! ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♘g6 23 e5! ♘xd5 24 ♗xg6+ fxg6 25 ♗xd5 dxe5 26 f5 ♘f6 27 fxg6+ ♗xg6 28 ♗f3 ♗f7 29 ♗f5+ 1-0. Knaak won several games in similar fashion.

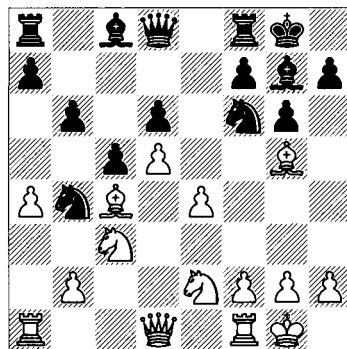
b) 10...♗a6! exploits the fact that White has weakened b4, and here this idea is better than the line we saw in the note to Black's 10th move

in Game 17, for the knight is on b8, not having wasted two tempi to get to c7. Then:

b1) In Knaak-Dolmatov, Leipzig 1981, the continuation was 11 h3 ♘b4 12 ♗b1 ♗e8 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♗a6 15 ♗d2 ♗h7 16 ♗e1 ♗e7! (with his minor pieces active, Black gets ready to lay siege to the e4-pawn) 17 f4 (this is a committal decision, since the e4-pawn will require protection, but of course White wants to break with e5) 17...♗d7 18 a5 ♗b7 19 ♗f2 ♗ae8 20 axb6 axb6 21 ♗g3, and here Black could have obtained an excellent position with the sacrifice 21...♘xe4! 22 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 – the d5-pawn is very weak.

b2) White can choose another destination for his d3-bishop: 11 ♗g5 ♘b4 12 ♗c4 (D).

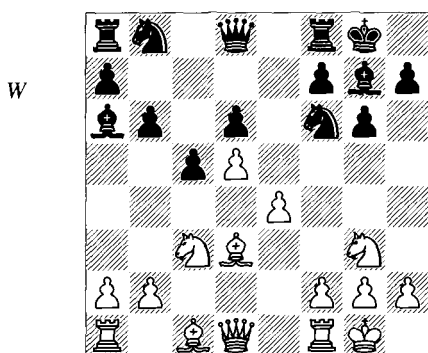
B



In Seirawan-Fedorowicz, USA Ch, Estes Park 1987, Black now made a serious inaccuracy:

he played 12...a6?!, which after 13 ♖d2 ♕e8 14 ♘g3, allowed White a free hand to prepare his typical break, whereas with the knight on b4, Black's ...b5 idea is less promising, since the black pawns on the queenside have little mobility. Black can improve with 12...h6!, putting the question to the g5-bishop before White plays ♖d2 and paralyzes the kingside. Matamoros-Gabriel, New York 1995 continued 13 ♙f4 ♘h5 (preparing ...f5; another idea is 13...g5, and if the bishop retreats along the c1-h6 diagonal, Black continues 14...♘g4 with the idea of 15...f5, or 15...♙e5, supporting ...c4 and ...♘d3) 14 ♙e3 f5 15 ♖d2 ♘h7 16 exf5 ♙xf5 17 f3 ♖h4 18 b3 ♙e5 19 g3 ♖h3 20 ♙ac1 g5 21 ♘b5 ♙f7, and the concentration of black forces against the white king is dangerous.

10...♙a6 (D)



11 ♙g5

Since e4 is defended, 11 ♘b5 is possible, but now 11...♙xb5 is a good reply since White cannot capture with a pawn, which would stop Black's queenside advance. Here it starts rolling after 12 ♙xb5 a6 13 ♙d3 b5 14 f4 ♘bd7, and it is difficult to know who has the upper hand after the change in structure.

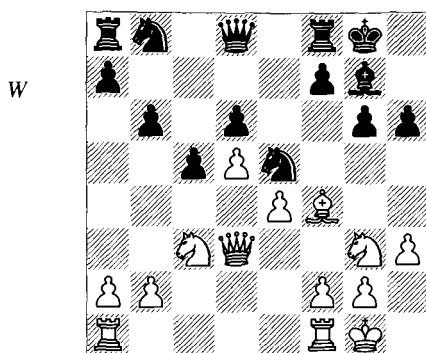
11...h6

The exchange 11...♙xd3 brings the white queen to a good location. After 12 ♖xd3 a6 13 f4 (threatening e5, winning) 13...♘bd7 14 ♙ae1 ♙e8, Black again stops the winning break, but besides 15 ♖f3, strongly threatening 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♘ce4, White is well-poised to give up the pawn straight away with 15 e5! dxe5 16 f5 b5 17 ♘ce4, getting a good blockade of e4.

12 ♙f4

It is better to wait for Black to exchange. It's no good to rush into 12 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 13 ♙e3 ♘c7 14 f4?! ♙e8!, and White's centre is exposed. If 15 ♖f3, there would follow the typical combination 15...♘fxd5!, followed by ...♙xe3, whereas against 15 ♘h1 the move 15...b5! is annoying.

12...♙xd3 13 ♖xd3 ♘g4 14 h3 ♙e5 (D)



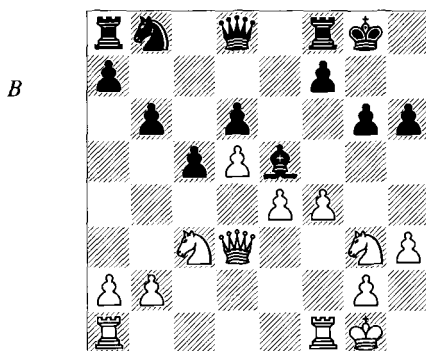
15 ♙xe5

At the cost of another piece exchange, White manages to push his kingside. Black's lack of development makes this measure worth considering.

15...♙xe5

15...dxe5?! is a poor idea – it is seldom advisable to concede a passed pawn and end up with the g7-bishop passive.

16 f4 (D)

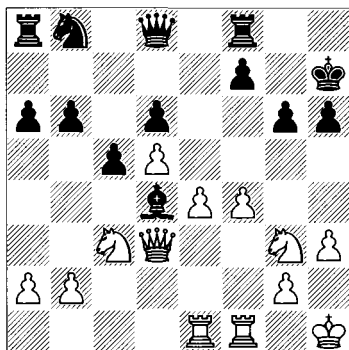


16...♙d4+!

Shutting the bishop in with 16...♙g7?! would allow 17 e5! dxe5 18 f5. As we see, this is one of the main motifs of the Modern Benoni, and of this line in particular.

17 ♖h1 ♜h7

17...a6 is an alternative, but since the d6-pawn is very important, it is not advisable to play 17...♞d7? 18 ♜b5! ♞xb2 19 ♖ab1 ♞g7 20 ♜xd6 ♞e7 21 ♜c4, when White has obtained a powerful centre, whereas Black's queenside is worthless.

18 ♖a1 a6 (D)**19 e5**

White decides to open up the game before Black develops his queenside. The quiet alternative was 19 ♜ge2 ♞g7 20 ♜g1, intending ♜f3.

19...dxe5 20 fxe5!

It is less convincing to play 20 f5?! ♞d7, as Black's bishop is active, and there is no serious danger for the black king.

20...♞d7 21 e6 ♜e5

Trying to keep the position closed. After 21...fxe6 22 dxe6 ♖xf1+? (for 22...♜e5 23 ♞e4 ♖e8 see the next note) 23 ♖xf1 ♜f6 24 ♜ge4 the f8-rook's absence is felt.

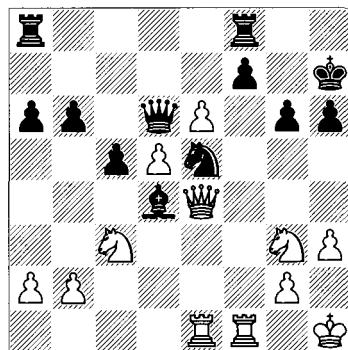
22 ♞e4 ♞d6! (D)

22...f5? is mistimed: White has 23 ♜xf5! gxf5 24 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 25 ♞xf5+ ♜g6 26 e7, and the central pawns win. After 22...fxe6! 23 dxe6 ♖e8 (23...♞d6?! 24 ♜d5 makes use of the free d5-square – Yermolinsky) 24 ♜f5! gxf5 25 ♖xf5 ♜g8 26 ♖xe5 ♞xe5 27 ♞e5 ♞g5. White has a choice of superior, though not necessarily winning, endings.

23 ♜f5!?

A sacrifice of great practical strength. White will force Black to adopt a difficult defence. It was possible to continue more quietly with 23 ♜ge2 fxe6 24 dxe6 ♖xf1+ 25 ♖xf1 ♖e8 26 ♜f4, and White's position is preferable: he has

W



stabilized his strong passed pawn, and the black king is exposed.

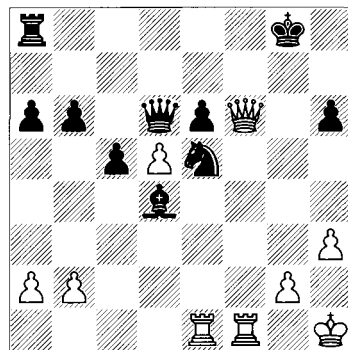
Other moves analysed by Yermolinsky are 23 ♜ce2 and 23 ♖f5, which don't lead to clear positions.

23...gxf5 24 ♞xf5+ ♜g8!

White wins after both 24...♜g6? 25 e7 ♖fe8 26 ♞xf7+ ♞g7 27 ♖e6 ♞g3 28 ♜e4 and 24...♜h8? 25 ♞f6+ ♜h7 26 ♜e4 ♞b8 27 ♞f5+ ♜h8 28 ♜f6 ♜g6 29 ♞h5 ♜g7 30 ♜g4.

25 ♜e4 fxe6 26 ♜f6+ ♖xf6 27 ♞xf6 (D)

B

**27...♖a7**

Bringing the rook to the defence. Another way of doing this was with 27...♜h7! 28 dxe6 ♖g8.

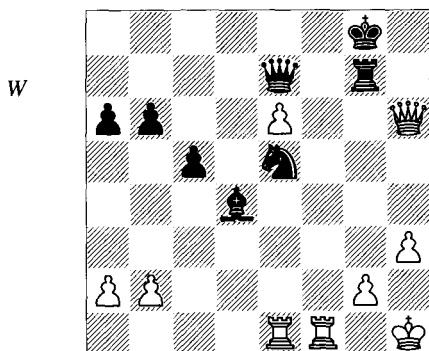
28 dxe6 ♖g7

Against 28...♜h7, defending h6, White would play 29 ♞f5+ ♜g6 30 ♖e4 ♖g7 31 h4, with a strong initiative.

29 ♞xb6 ♞e7 (D)

The e6-pawn needs to be kept under surveillance. If 29...♞g6, there follows 30 e7! ♖xh6 31 e8♞+ ♜h7 32 ♖f8, after which the sequence 32...♖xh3+ 33 gxf3 ♞d5+ 34 ♜h2 ♜f3+ 35

♞xf3 ♞xf3 36 ♞e7+ ♟g7 37 ♞h4+ ♚g8 38 b3 doesn't save Black – the extra exchange wins. However, Black should insert 29... ♞d5! (controlling h5) 30 ♞e2 ♞c6 (not 30... ♞c4? 31 e7!).



30 ♞e4!

Threatening both 31 ♞h4 and 31 ♞ef4 .

30...♞h7

If 30... ♞g6 , then 31 ♞g4! ♞xg4 32 hxg4 , with the idea of 33 ♞f5 , is strong.

31 ♞f4 ♞h5 32 ♞f6?!

Instead of swapping queens, it seems better to keep them and try to penetrate the queenside with 32 ♞g3+ ♞g5 (if 32... ♚h8 , there follows 33 ♞ff4 , and the black king cannot resist) 33 ♞a3 , threatening 34 ♞xd4 and also the a6-pawn.

32...♞xf6 33 ♞xf6 ♞h7 34 ♞f5

Yermolinsky recommended 34 ♞ef4 ♞e7 35 b3 , but 35... ♞e8 is not easy to overcome.

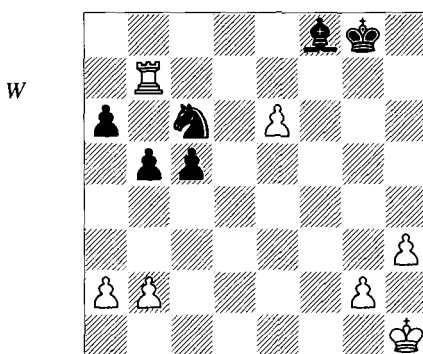
34...♞c6

If 34... ♞xb2 , the sequence 35 ♞e3! ♞g7 is nice, and now not 36 ♞b3?! ♞c4 37 ♞bf3 , with an unclear position, but the elegant *zwischenzug* 36 ♞g3! , threatening 37 e7 , thus forcing Black to remove the knight. After 36... ♞c6 37 ♞b3 followed by ♞xb6 Black's position suffers.

35 ♞g4+ ♞g7 36 ♞xg7+ ♞xg7?

36... ♚xg7! 37 ♞f7+ ♚g6 38 h4 ♞f6! 39 h5+ ♚f5 40 ♞b7 b5 (a line indicated by *Fritz*) is more tenacious – the black king takes a more active part in the fight. Instead, after the text-move the king will end up shut in, and White will impose his material advantage.

37 ♞f7 ♞f8 38 ♞b7 b5 (D)



39 ♞c7!

The c5-pawn falls and with it all the rest.

39... ♞e7 40 ♞xc5 ♚g7 41 ♞c7 ♚f6 42 ♞a7 ♚xe6 43 ♞xa6+ 1-0

Game 19 [A65]

Alexei Dreev – Teimour Radjabov

European Ch, Warsaw 2005

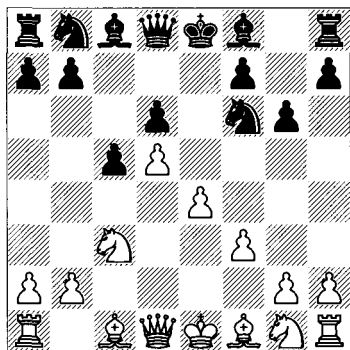
1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♞c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 (D)

This flexible move has obvious similarities with the Sämisch King's Indian. White securely defends e4 and rules out any ideas of ... ♞g4 or ... ♞g4 . On the other hand, it takes away the f3-square from the king's knight, and means that White will lose a tempo if he subsequently opts for an approach based on f4 and e5.

7...♞g7

Now White must choose how to develop his pieces. The move f3 controls g4 and so prepares ♞e3 , and means White can delay a decision on the destination of the g1-knight. This may enable him to develop it to h3 if Black rushes to play ... ♞bd7 . From h3 the knight has the good f2-square, controlling g4 and protecting the e4-pawn, thus making it possible to advance strongly with f4.

B

**8 Qg2**

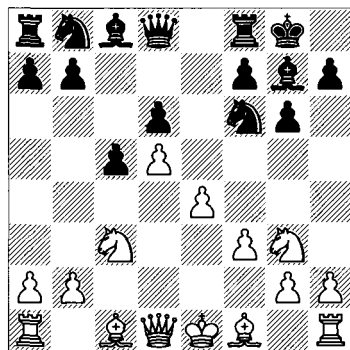
This is the idea popularized by Alexei Dreev: he decides not to engage in a duel of development between the g1-knight and the b8-knight and instead delays a decision about the destination of his queen's bishop. He doesn't make the 'natural' moves Qe3 and Wd2, in order to leave e3 and d2 free, thus being able to use them with the g3-knight in case it is driven back prematurely with ...h5-h4, reaching the ideal square c4 via Qf1-e3-c4 or Qf1-d2-c4.

These are general considerations: the final destination of the knight will depend on how the black forces are deployed.

The alternatives are 8 Qg5 and 8 Qe3, which can transpose to positions we shall see later. If he plays 8 Qd3 followed by Qge2, then the move f3 is rendered rather pointless: 7 Qd3 at once would have been better, as in the Knaak Variation.

8...0-0 9 Qg3 (D)

B



This position is more usually reached via the move-order 1 d4 Qf6 2 c4 g6 3 Qc3 Qg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 Qge2 c5 7 d5 e6 8 Qg3 exd5 9

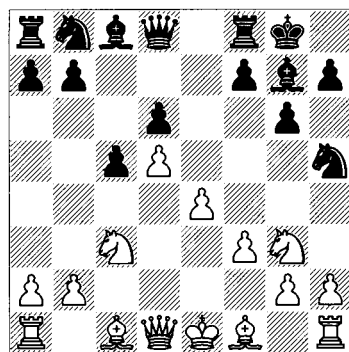
cxd5. Now it is Black who must choose what to do. He doesn't play the generally useful move ...Qe8, occupying the e-file, because here there is no pressure on e4. In order to weaken it, it is necessary to play the thematic break ...f5, and there are several ways of doing this.

9...h5

Despite appearances, this is consistent with the plan of playing ...f5. Black wins space on the kingside without losing tempi because he attacks the g3-knight, and makes h7 available to the f6-knight.

A very different idea is 9...Qh5!? (D).

W



Black allows White to damage his structure in order to speed up the break ...f5. This is the line recommended by Watson. The weakness of the black pawns won't be felt in the near future. 10 Qxh5 gxh5 11 Qd3 (the black pieces develop very easily after 11 Qe3 f5 12 Wd2 fxe4 13 Qxe4 Qf5 14 Qd3 Qd7) 11...f5 12 0-0 (let's not forget that 12 exf5 leaves the d5-pawn isolated, which can be important in the ending) and now:

a) Watson suggested 12...Qa6.

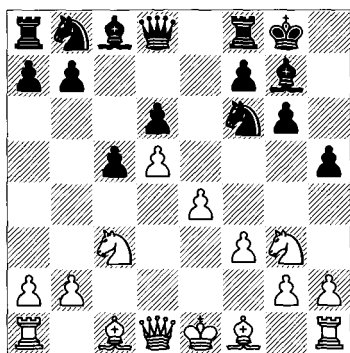
b) If Black could achieve a blockade with 12...f4, and then occupy the e5-square and the g-file, it would be fantastic, but in Narciso-Herreraiz, Barcelona 2000 there followed 13 Qe2 Qe5 14 g3! and Black had to abandon the blockade. After 14...fxg3 15 hxg3 Qh3 16 Wf2 h4 17 Wh2 Wc8 18 Qf4 c4 19 Qxh3 Qxf4 20 Qf1 Wf7 21 f4, White won space and consolidated a strong centre.

c) 12...Qd7 13 Qc2 (in view of the blow ...c4) 13...Qe5 14 Qe2 Qg6 15 exf5 Qxf5 16 Qxf5 Wxf5 17 Qg3 Wf7 18 Qxh5 Qd4+ 19

♔h1 ♖h4 20 f4 ♜e8 gave Black adequate compensation for the pawn in Khenkin-Reiderman, European Ch, Ohrid 2001 – he is very active.

We now return to 9...h5 (D):

W



10 ♖e2

Making room for the g3-knight in case of 10...h4, considering that ...h4 is also risky for Black because the pawn can become exposed and because its advance leaves the black king's position weak.

Not having played ♖e3 seems to argue more strongly for 10 ♖g5, but it is not clear whether this is any better. Black has to unpin in order to continue with his plan; for example, 10...♗b6 accomplishes this with tempo by attacking b2. Then:

a) Dreev-Bologan, Shanghai 2001 continued 11 ♗b3 ♗c7 12 ♖e2 a6 13 0-0 (Dreev doesn't play a4 and allows ...b5 with the idea of later on attacking it with a4, but Bologan continues with his plan on the kingside) 13...♘h7 14 ♖e3 h4 15 ♘h1 f5, and Black had a reasonable position.

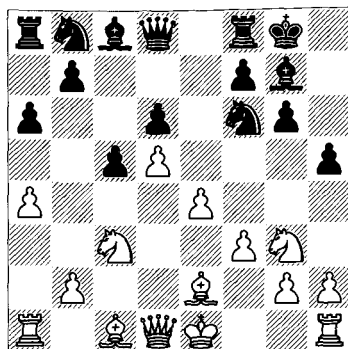
b) In case of the more natural 11 ♗d2, Black follows with his plan all the same: 11...♘h7 12 ♖h4, when besides the natural 12...♘d7, there is another idea, 12...f6, with the threat of ...g5, forcing a delay in castling. Bosch-Nijboer, Hilversum 2006 continued 13 ♘ge2 ♘d7 14 ♖f2 ♘e5 15 ♘f4 ♖h6 16 ♖e3 f5, with a playable position for Black.

10...a6 11 a4 (D)

11...♘h7

Preparing ...f5. Black doesn't force the g3-knight back yet, waiting for White to castle so

B



that the knight has no access to f1. In the event of ♘c4 the weakness of b6 would become apparent, given that ...a6 and a4 have been played.

It is also possible to ignore White's move-order with 11...h4 12 ♘f1 ♘h7, followed by ...f5, although White can then play 13 ♘e3, heading for c4.

12 ♖e3

Delaying castling with a useful move, it is true. But it is also true that 12 0-0?? loses to 12...♘d4+ 13 ♔h1 h4, when the g3-knight has no square.

12...♘d7

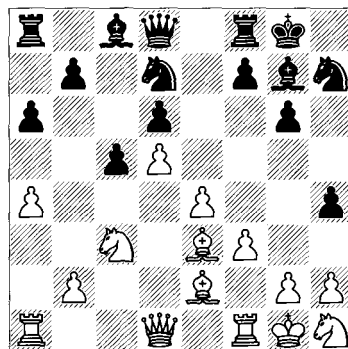
12...h4 13 ♘f1 ♘d7 14 ♖f2 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 f4, followed by ♘e3, is possible, with a double-edged position. If White manages to play ♘c4 without major troubles, he will stand better, but the white king in the centre makes the position complex, Dreev-Gallagher, Gibraltar 2004.

13 0-0

There are no more useful moves: 13 ♗d2?? h4 14 ♘f1 would leave the f1-knight without a good square.

13...h4 14 ♘h1 (D)

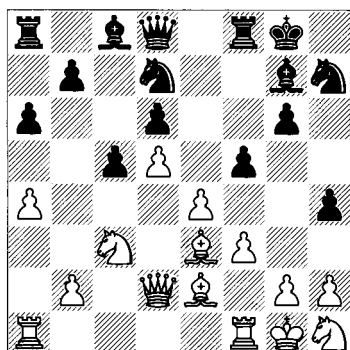
B



Despite the ugly look of the h1-knight, it will go to the good f2-square in four tempi, ♖e2-g3-h1 and f2, two tempi more than if it had played ♖h3 and ♖f2, but those two tempi are the advance ...h5-h4 by Black, which White hopes to transform into a weakness.

14...f5 15 ♖d2 (D)

B



Stopping Black's ...f4. This is a basic position of the Kapengut Variation.

15...♗f6

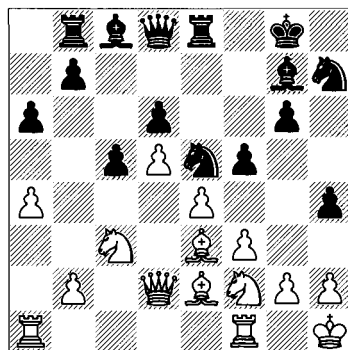
Insisting on ...f4 – this is the second most common move in the position.

There are several other possibilities, the most important being 15...♖e5, although this position is generally reached via another move-order by which the knight is already there (e.g., 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♖e3 c5 7 ♖ge2 ♖c6 8 d5 ♖e5 9 ♖g3 e6 10 ♖e2 exd5 11 cxd5 a6 12 a4 h5 13 0-0 ♖h7 14 ♗d2 h4 15 ♖h1 f5).

Let's see an example. Lautier-Kotronias, Moscow 2004 continued 16 ♖f2 ♖e8 (other options are 16...b6, to bring the a8-rook to the other side along the second rank, 16...♖b8, preparing ...b5 without deciding upon the destination of the f8-rook yet, and 16...♗f6, insisting on ...f4) 17 ♖h1 (getting out of typical 'Indian' tactical motifs, and also with another idea; note that White hasn't developed his a1-rook yet, in order to discourage ...b5, for the rook could then infiltrate to a7) 17...♖b8 (D).

18 ♖g1! (to win space by advancing the g-pawn) 18...♖h8 19 g4! fxe4?! (Lautier pointed out that 19...hxg3 20 ♖xg3 {threatening f4} 20...fxe4! 21 ♖cxe4 ♖f5 was preferable, with a playable position) 20 ♖cxe4 b5 21 axb5 axb5

W

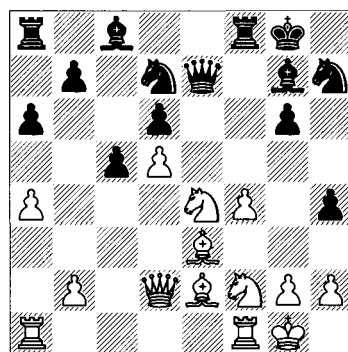


22 ♖h6! (this bishop exchange is almost always good for White, who further weakens the position of the black king) 22...♖h6?! 23 ♗xh6 ♗e7 24 f4, and White has a winning position – he captures on g6 without compensation.

16 exf5

The alternative is 16 f4. Black gets an acceptable game after 16...fxe4 17 ♖f2 (if 17 ♖xe4, the pawn exchange doesn't suit Black, for after 17...♗xb2? 18 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 19 ♖ab1 ♖e8 20 ♖xd6 ♖xe3 21 ♖xb2, Black's majority is held back, and as almost always in the Modern Benoni, the passed pawn on d5 is very strong; Black has to play 17...♗e7) 17...♗e7 18 ♖cxe4 (D).

B



18...♖df6 (once ...f5 and ...h5 have been played, the e6-square becomes weaker, so Black has to watch out for the manoeuvre ♖g5-e6) and now:

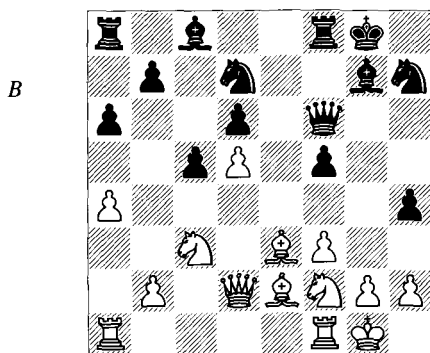
a) 19 ♖xf6+?! (this won't bring the expected results) 19...♗xf6 20 b4 (this thematic break was the idea, but the open e-file gives Black too much counterplay) 20...♖e8 21 ♖a3 (if 21 bxc5,

there follows 21...♖c3!, with both material and positional advantage after, e.g., 22 ♖d3 ♖xd2 23 ♖xd2 ♖xa1 24 ♖xa1 ♖f5) 21...♗b2 22 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 23 ♖b3 cxb4 24 ♖xb2 ♖xe3, Dreev-Karpov, Reykjavik (rapid) 2004.

b) It is better to keep the tension with 19 ♖f3. Black can play 19...♖f5 20 ♖c3 ♗d7, threatening ...b5, followed by ...♖ae8-e7, with a good game. Playing 21 a5 compromises White for the position has more open fronts than in 'normal' positions and the defence of this pawn is awkward.

16...gxf5 17 ♖f2 (D)

In view of what follows, perhaps it is more promising to play 17 f4 but White wants to preserve that square for his h1-knight, with ♖h3-f4.



17...f4!

Giving up the e4- and g4-squares, but Black will also have compensating advantages: his pieces will develop easily, and the surrender of these squares won't be serious.

The most usual continuation is, or used to be, 17...♖e5. After 18 ♖h3 ♖g6 (preventing ♖f4) 19 f4, Kapengut recommended developing with 19...♖d7, and only then playing ...♖ae8. If White plays a5 too soon, ...♖fb8!? might come into consideration. Instead, 19...♖e8 prematurely weakened the f5-pawn in Dreev-Nataf, Calvia Olympiad 2004. The game continued 20 ♖h5 ♖d7 21 a5 ♖e7 22 ♖f2 ♖ae8 23 ♖a3! (to lay siege to the weaknesses on b7 and d6, exploiting the fact that Black's minor pieces are far away) 23...♖hf8 24 ♖b3 ♖c8 25 ♖a4 ♖d7 26 ♖xc5! ♖b5 (if 26...dxc5, then 27 ♖b6, winning) 27 ♖d3, with an extra pawn for which Black has no compensation.

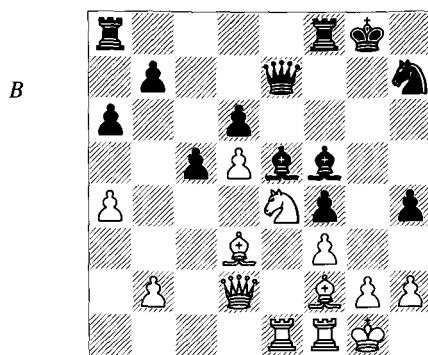
18 ♖g4 ♗g5 19 ♖f2 ♖e5 20 ♖e4 ♗e7 21 ♖xe5 ♖xe5

Not only do the pawns on f4 and h4 neutralize Lautier's plan of ♖h1, ♖g1 and g4, but they also force White to watch out for a future ...h3 by Black, which combined with the occupation of the g-file with ...♗g7, ...♖h8 and ...♖g8, is worrying.

22 ♖ae1 ♖f5

22...h3 is interesting, but Black remembers that "the threat is stronger than its execution", and keeps this advance as an idea that White must take into consideration at each turn.

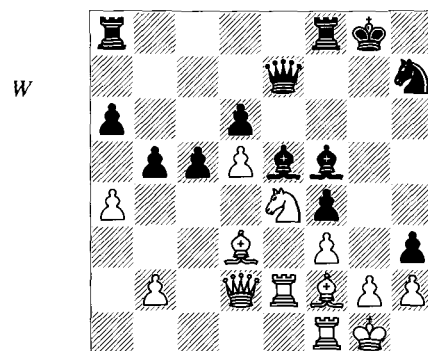
23 ♖d3 (D)



23...b5!

Opening another front. The pawn is untouchable – if 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖xb5, then 25...♖ab8 and if the bishop retreats, Black takes on b2, whereas 26 ♖c3 h3 27 g4 ♖g5 28 ♗e2 ♗g7 leaves White's position hanging by a thread.

24 ♖e2 h3! (D)



Only now – the weakness of the white king will become apparent.

25 g4 ♖xe4 26 ♖xe4 ♜g5

There is nothing left of White's control of e4 and g4.

27 ♖h1 ♗g7 28 b3 ♖ab8

Threatening an invasion of b2 after the exchange of pawns. Another idea is the immediate 28...bxa4!, followed by ...♖fb8.

29 a5 (D)

29...♖bc8

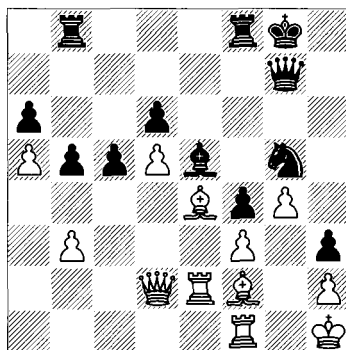
Once the a- and b-files are closed, the c5-pawn is ready to advance, bringing the rook into play.

30 ♖h4 c4 31 bxc4 ♖xc4 32 ♖fe1?

A blunder. 32 ♖xg5, or 32 ♖f5 first, was necessary.

32...♜xe4 33 ♖xe4 ♖c3

B



Winning the exchange without any compensation.

34 ♗f2 ♖xe1 35 ♖xe1 ♗h7 36 ♖g5 ♗d3 37 ♖h6 ♖c2 38 ♗f1 ♗d2 39 ♗g1 ♖fc8 0-1

Summary

On White's 9th move in Game 17, the game Penrose-Tal, Leipzig Olympiad 1960 is quoted, in which the thematic manoeuvre 19 e5!! dxe5 20 f5 appeared for the first time, in this case carried out in ideal circumstances.

We see that choosing the order of the 'mandatory' moves h3, f4 and ♜g3 is important, in the note to White's 10th move.

Also there we see that White must keep the counter ...c4 under control. The exchange of the pawn on c4 for the one on e4 once White has played f4 is almost always good for Black, because it leaves many weaknesses exposed.

We saw that the automatic 12...a6?! in Seirawan-Fedorowicz, USA Ch, Estes Park 1987 (in the note to White's 10th move of Game 18) led to an inferior position. Instead in Matamoros-Gabriel, New York 1995 Black prevented White's positional threat with 12...h6!.

In Game 18 we see that the exchange of light-squared bishops reduces White's attacking potential, but it does not neutralize it completely. White still has a majority on the kingside. On moves 11 and 12 we see a duel around the most appropriate time for each side to swap bishops. Tactical reasons decide the issue, like the typical combination 15...♜fxd5!, followed by ...♖xe3, because of the pin on the g1-a7 diagonal.

On Black's 16th move we see mentioned again the sacrifice 17 e5! dxe5 18 f5, which is one of the main motifs of the Modern Benoni, and of this line in particular.

Returning to the main line of Game 18, after carrying out the break on e5 under good circumstances, White managed to force the black pieces momentarily into bad positions. This justified the sacrifice 23 ♜f5!?, which started a strong initiative that, although not winning, had great practical strength, showing how dangerous White's pawn offensive is.

In the Kapengut Variation, covered in Game 19, the strength or weakness of the advance ...h5 and ...h4 by Black is seen in many instances. It is difficult to evaluate, but when other factors are added, such as an open a-file and the exchange of the dark-squared bishops as in Lautier-Kotronias, Moscow 2004, quoted on Black's 15th move, the situation is clarified. In the subsequent note we see that the break 20 b4 from Dreev-Karpov, Reykjavik (rapid) 2004 just gave Black even more initiative.

In the main game, the surrender of an important central square with 17...f4! was justified because Black's activity prevented an effective blockade.

6 Systems with ♖f4 and ♖g5

In this chapter we shall examine lines where White develops his queen's bishop to g5 or f4 at an early stage of the game.

Game 20 features ♗g5 and e4, with White allowing Black's thematic queenside expansion by ...a6 and ...b5. The typical struggle to find the best moment to attack the pawn-chain with a4 ensued, analysed in several phases of the game.

In **Game 21** White plays ♗g5 and e3. The pawn exerts less pressure in the centre but in return it leaves the b1-h7 diagonal open, which is weakened if Black plays the typical plan of ...h6, ...g5 and ...♗h5 to get rid of the white bishop.

Then we move on to the line 6 ♗f3 g6 7 ♗f4, which is examined in Games 22 and 23. This approach was used often in the 1980s, although now it is seen less frequently. The Russian GM Yuri Yakovich is one of its loyal followers. The f4-bishop puts pressure on d6, and in the event of 7...♗g7, White plans 8 ♖a4+, when 8...♗d7 is almost forced. Then after 9 ♖b3 White attacks b7, Black's extra tempo ...♗d7 being of doubtful utility.

Black can, as in **Game 22**, choose 7...a6, when White can no longer play the disruptive queen check. His most critical reply is to allow the expansion by ...b5, seeking to prove that the time spent can be put to good use in the centre, or else that the ...b5 advance, lacking its normal support from Black's pieces, is premature here. However, Black's resources appear adequate. This is just as well, since 7...♗g7 is undergoing a bad spell for Black, as **Game 23** shows. After 8 ♖a4+ ♗d7 9 ♖b3 the sacrifice 9...b5 is also analysed. Although the lines arising if Black defends the b7-pawn by 9...♖c7 are quite complicated, they appear to favour White.

Game 20 [A72]

Dmitry Tyomkin – Pascal Charbonneau

Montreal 2005

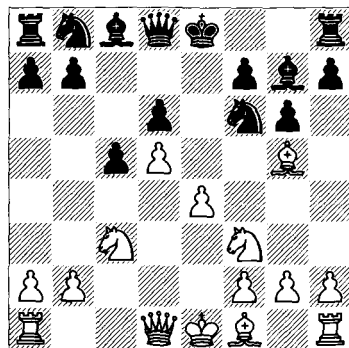
1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♗c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♗f3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 (D)

In some lines, such as the Classical Variation from Chapter 1, the c1-bishop plays a passive role in the early stages of the game. In this instance White develops it in the first place, so as later on to manoeuvre with more freedom.

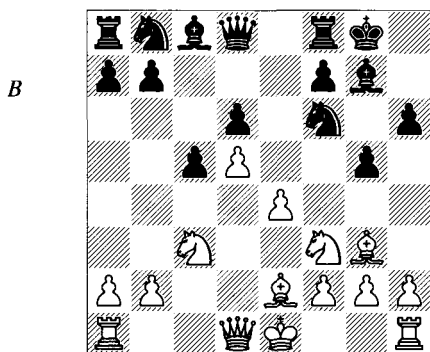
8...h6

It makes sense to force the bishop to choose a diagonal, and deny it some of its active possibilities. Let's see an example where Black

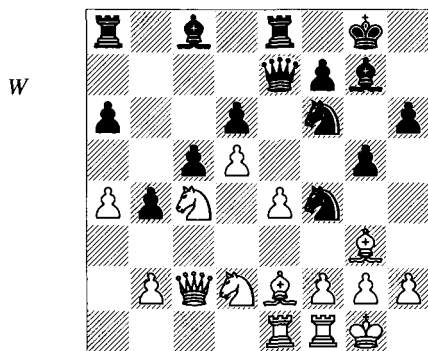
B



doesn't react in the best possible way: 8...0-0?! 9 ♖e2?! (9 ♖d2!) 9...h6 10 ♖h4 g5 11 ♗g3 (D).



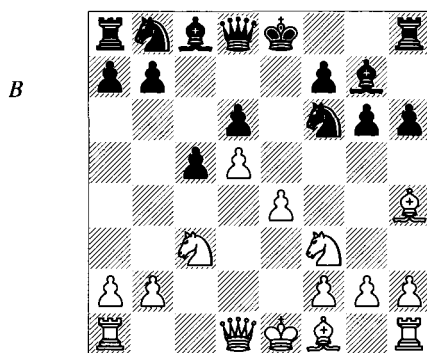
Now 11...b5?! is a standard tactical blow in the Modern Benoni: it attacks the e4-pawn by threatening 12...b4, and if 12 ♖xb5, there follows 12...♗xe4! 13 ♖xe4 ♖a5+ 14 ♖c3?! ♖xc3+, winning back the piece in good circumstances. However, in this case White has an effective antidote, 12 ♖d2!, stopping 12...b4 due to 13 ♖b5 followed by 14 ♖c4, as well as preventing ...♗h5. The g3-bishop is thus strongly putting pressure on the weakness on d6. Najdorf-Fischer, Santa Monica 1966 continued 12...a6 13 0-0 ♖e8 14 ♖c2 ♖e7? (Black should try the typical resource 14...b4 15 ♖a4 ♖xd5, which isn't refuted by 16 ♖c4 ♖f4 17 ♖xf4 gxf4 18 ♖ab6, due to 18...♖b7!; once this chance is missed, White finishes instructively) 15 ♖ae1 ♖bd7 16 a4! (with this typical idea, possible when the e4-pawn is safe, White weakens Black's queenside, and gets squares for his knights) 16...b4 17 ♖d1 ♖e5 (if 17...♖xe4, then 18 ♖d3) 18 ♖e3 ♖g6 (to neutralize the g3-bishop with ...♖f4) 19 ♖ec4 ♖f4 (D).



20 ♖xf4! (without giving Black time to blockade, which would happen after 20 ♖f3 ♖d7!) 20...gxf4 21 e5! (with this typical breakthrough, White's dynamic advantage crystallizes) 21...dxe5 22 ♖f3 ♖f8 23 ♖xe5 ♖b7 24 ♖dc4 ♖ad8 (if 24...♖xd5, then 25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♖d7! wins) 25 ♖c6 ♖xe1 26 ♖xe1 ♖e8 (the passed pawn on c6 would prove decisive after 26...♖xc6 27 dxc6) 27 ♖d1 ♖c8 28 h3 ♖e8 29 ♖6a5 ♖b8 30 ♖f5 ♖d6? 31 ♖xd6 1-0.

In the same tournament the right path was shown: 11...♖h5! 12 ♖d2 ♖xg3 13 hxc3 ♖d7 14 ♖c4 ♖e7 15 ♖e3 ♖f6 16 ♖c2 ♖e8 17 ♖b5 ♖d8!, with a good game for Black, Larsen-Fischer, Santa Monica 1966 – of course Black mustn't exchange his light-squared bishop, because of the weakness on f5.

9 ♖h4 (D)



9...a6

Since White hasn't castled yet, 9...g5 10 ♖g3 ♖h5 is met by 11 ♖b5+ ♖f8 12 e5!, and practice has shown that the pawn is adequately compensated by the black king's lack of safety after 12...♖xg3 13 fxg3!.

10 ♖d2

After 10 a4 g5 11 ♖g3 ♖h5 Black reaches a satisfactory position.

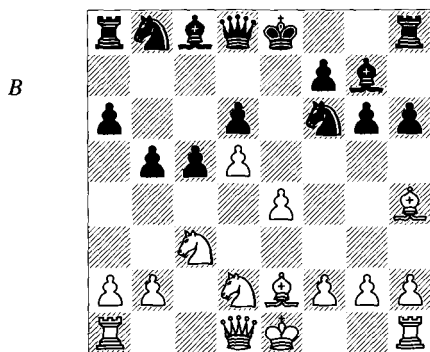
10...b5!

Not letting himself be tricked. If 10...0-0?!, there would follow 11 a4, keeping the annoying h4-bishop, without giving up anything in return. Although it has been played, it is an unnecessary concession.

11 ♖e2 (D)

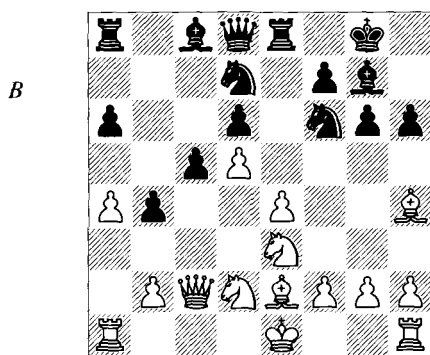
As in Najdorf-Fischer, White hopes to finish his development and eventually strike with a4.

Other possibilities are 11 a4 straight away, 11 ♙d3 and 11 ♚c2 , to play a4 and drop the c3-knight back to d1.



11...0-0 12 0-0

We should note an important resource for Black: Calderin-Gilb.Hernandez, Merida 1997 continued 12 ♚c2 ♜bd7 13 a4 b4 14 ♞d1 ♞e8 15 ♞e3 (D).

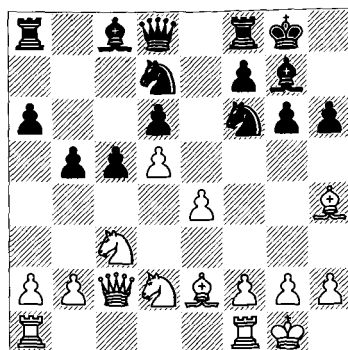


15...b3! (this idea arises in many lines where White has limited control of e4; Black exploits this to leave the white pieces without coordination, as exchanging pawns would favour him) 16 ♚b1 ♞b8 17 a5 (here we see another virtue of 15...b3, namely, that it makes b4 available for the rook to harass the e4-pawn) 17... ♞b4 18 ♞ec4 ♞e5 19 ♞b6 g5 20 ♞g3 ♞xe4 ! 21 ♞xe4 ♞f5 22 f3 ♞xf3 + 23 gxf3 ♞bxe4 24 0-0 ♞xe2 25 ♚xf5 ♞xb2 26 ♞ab1 , and now 26... ♞d4 ! 27 ♞h1 b2 would have given Black an excellent position.

12...♞e8

Let's see another way of countering the blow a4: 12... ♜bd7 13 ♚c2 (D).

B



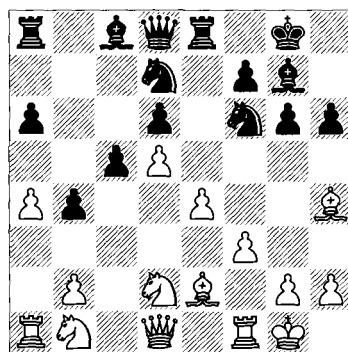
13...c4 (prepared by the previous move, as it is necessary to have ... ♞b8 ready; Black anticipates a4, and plans ... ♞c5 – he is not afraid of giving up control of d4 because here no white knight can go quickly to d4) 14 a4 ♞b8 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4 (necessary, as otherwise ... ♞c5 would follow) 16...cxb3! (as we already know from the Classical Variation, the sort of blocked position that would arise if Black did not capture is usually good for White) 17 ♚xb3 ?! (for tactical reasons 17 ♞xb3 is preferable, though Black has good play after 17... ♚c7) 17... ♞c5 18 ♚b4 ♞e8 19 ♞g3 ♞h5 ! 20 ♞xh5 gxh5, and in return for the doubled pawns Black controls d3 and strengthens his passed pawn, Sorin-Vera, Bayamo 1988.

13 f3?!

Instead of this very passive move, White should try the more ambitious 13 f4, 13 ♚c2 (preparing a4) or the direct 13 a4.

13...♜bd7 14 a4 b4 15 ♞cb1 (D)

B



15...g5!

After this advance Black gets good control of the e5- and f4-squares.

16 ♖f2 ♘h5

Even better seems 16...♘e5!, when after 17 ♘c4 ♘xc4 18 ♖xc4 the bishop ends up badly placed. Black seizes the initiative with 18...♘d7 19 ♖c2 ♖f6 20 ♖a2 ♘e5 21 ♘d2 ♖g6, and the break ...f5 is already prepared.

17 ♘c4 ♘e5 18 ♘bd2 ♘f4 19 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♘c4 ♖g7 21 ♖e1 f5

This break is less strong than in the previous note because now the white pieces are better coordinated.

22 exf5

This assists Black's development. The alternative was to increase the control of the centre in return for ending up with a weak pawn on e4 after 22 ♖f1 fxe4 23 fxe4 ♖a7! 24 g3 ♘g6 25 ♖h5 ♖h7.

22...♖xf5 23 ♖d2 ♖xe2

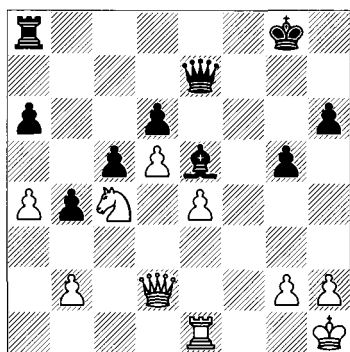
Black gets nothing special out of these fireworks. 23...♖f6 24 ♖f1 ♖g6 is more natural.

24 ♖xe2 ♖d3 25 ♖e4 ♖xe4 26 fxe4 ♖e7 27 ♖e1 ♘g6?!

Black is fine but unwisely tries for more. The idea of placing the knight on e5 will be punished. He could have played 27...♖f8 28 ♖d1 ♖f6 29 ♖e3 ♖g6 30 ♖f2 ♖f6.

28 ♖g3 ♖d4+ 29 ♖h1 ♘e5 30 ♖xe5! ♖xe5 (D)

W



Which is more important, the strong 'Benoni' bishop or the c4-knight? If there were more pieces on the board, one could have doubts, but with the pawn-structure stable, no significant breaks, and no tactical play, the weaknesses of d6 and the black a-pawn are more important – White has the advantage.

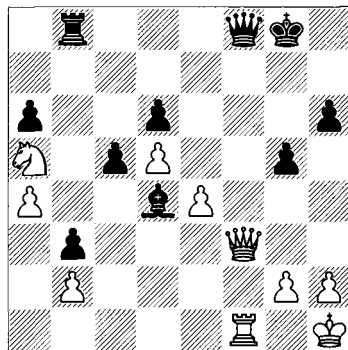
31 ♖e2 ♖d4 32 ♖f1 b3?!

Very risky. This pawn will be very weak when the game becomes more simplified. Tyomkin indicates that the cause was a mutual time-scramble.

33 ♖f3 ♖b8 34 ♘a5 ♖f8 (D)

The counterplay after 34...♖xb2 35 ♘c6 ♖b7 36 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 is not enough due to 37 ♖f7+ ♖h8 38 ♖g6 ♖g7 39 e5! dxe5 40 d6.

W

**35 ♖xf8+**

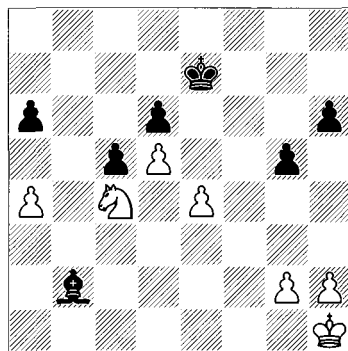
The endgame is awful for Black, who can only await developments. Another way was 35 ♖d3 followed by ♖xa6.

35...♖xf8 36 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 37 ♘xb3

Tyomkin points out the tactical trap Black was hoping White would fall into: 37 ♘c4? ♖e7 38 g4 ♖f6 39 ♖g2 ♖xb2! 40 ♘xb2 ♖e5, when it is Black who wins thanks to his passed pawns.

37...♖xb2 38 ♘a5 ♖e7 39 ♘c4 (D)

B



Tyomkin explains that the three weaknesses on a6, d6 and h6 are serious. Furthermore d6 and h6 are on the same colour squares as the black bishop.

39...♙c1 40 g4!

Fixing the weakness of h6. Tyomkin explains that this is the first stage of the winning plan.

40...♙f4 41 h3 ♖f6 42 ♖g2 ♙e5 43 ♖f3 ♙h2 44 ♖a5!

To force Black to play ...a5, ending up with yet another weak pawn and granting the white king access to the b5-square.

44...♙e5 45 ♖e3 ♙c3 46 ♖c6 a5 47 ♖d3 ♙b4 48 ♖c4 ♙d2 49 e5+!

More direct than the winning queen ending arising from 49 ♖b5 ♙e1 50 ♖xa5 ♙xa5 51 ♖xa5 ♖e5 52 ♖b5 ♖d4 53 e5! c4 54 exd6 c3 55 d7 c2 56 d8 ♖c1 ♖57 a5.

49...dxe5 50 ♖xc5 e4 51 ♖d4 e3 52 ♖d3 ♖f7 53 ♖e5+ ♖e7 54 ♖c4 ♙c1 55 ♖xa5 ♖d6 56 ♖c4+ ♖xd5 57 ♖xe3+ 1-0

Game 21 [A61]

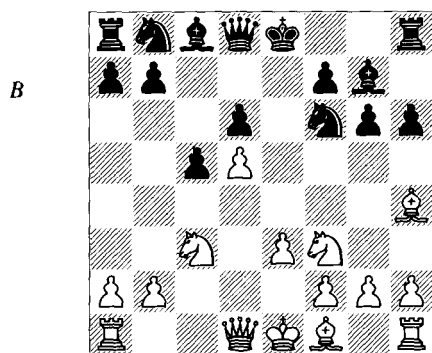
Spyridon Skembris – Hristodoulos Banikas

Kalamata 2005

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖f3 g6 7 ♙g5 h6 8 ♙h4 ♙g7

Black has at his disposal the recipe 8...g5 9 ♙g3 ♖h5 getting rid of the annoying bishop, a line which has been considered satisfactory for a long time.

9 e3 (D)



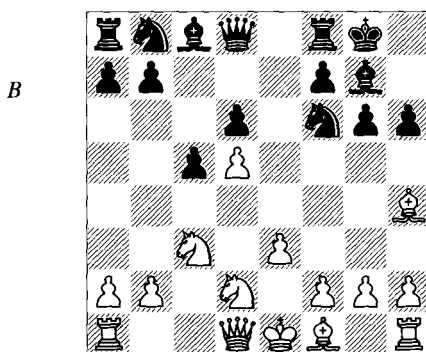
This is the difference from the previous game: White refrains from playing e4 in order to keep the b1-h7 diagonal open.

9...0-0

9...g5 10 ♙g3 ♖h5 is still possible: 11 ♙d3 (occupying the diagonal which was left open; it is interesting to insert 11 ♙b5+ forcing 11...♖f8, for interposing on d7 loses the d6-pawn, but White cannot exploit Black's loss of castling rights because his pieces aren't aggressively developed, and the e5 break is still far away) 11...♖xg3 12 hxg3 ♖d7 13 ♖c2 a6 14 a4 ♖e7 15 ♙f5 (the exchange of these bishops

is good for White) 15...♖e5 (helping the opponent, considering that the exchange is not dangerous; another idea is to prepare ...b5 with 15...b6, followed by ...♖b8) 16 a5 ♙xf5 17 ♖xf5 ♖d7 18 ♖c2 0-0-0 19 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 20 ♖a4 ♖b8 21 ♖b6 and now 21...♖e7?! 22 g4! gave White a slight edge in Tukmakov-G.Agzamov, Erevan Zonal 1982, but Watson's recommendation 21...♖b5! is better: if 22 ♖c4, there follows 22...h5!, and Black has a good game.

10 ♖d2 (D)

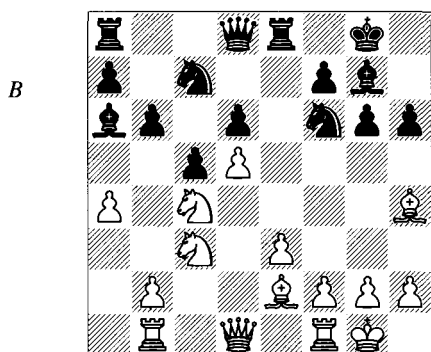


Preventing ...g5 and ...♖h5. Black cannot remain passive and let White finish his development and play e4 and f4.

10...b6

Preparing ...♙a6 to exchange the c8-bishop, which often in the Modern Benoni has little activity and obstructs the movements of the other pieces. Black also retains the possibility of the typical manoeuvre ...♖a6-c7.

The main alternative is 10...♗a6. Play can be similar to the ...♗a6 Classical. The fact that the pawn is on e3 and not on e4 can be good for Black because the d5-pawn needs protection. For example, 11 a4 ♖c7 12 ♖c4 b6 13 ♗e2 (Balashov-Garcia Palermo, Malmö 1987 continued 13 ♗d3 ♗a6 14 0-0 ♗d7 15 e4 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 17 ♖e1 b5 and after expanding on the queenside Black ended up better) 13...♗a6 14 0-0 ♖e8 15 ♖b1 (D).



Moving off the long diagonal in order to play b3, thus freeing the e2-bishop. White also wants to be able to retake with the pawn on c4: 15...♗d7 (Black can pre-empt White's plan with 15...♗xc4! 16 ♗xc4 ♗d7, the idea being ...a6 and ...b5, as we already saw) 16 b3 ♖e4 17 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♗g3 ♗xc4 19 ♗xc4 a6 20 ♗d3 ♖ee8 21 e4 led to complications in Avrukh-Mittelman, Israeli Team Ch 1999, although Black's approach is not convincing.

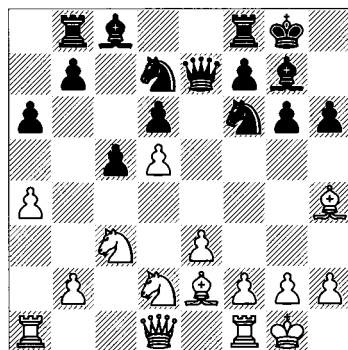
The development of the b8-knight via d7 is another line that has been played, although it is more difficult to handle (and has similarities to the line 7 h3 a6 8 a4 ♗e7 9 ♗g5 ♗g7 10 e3 of the Modern Variation). For instance, 10...♗bd7 11 ♗e2 a6 12 a4 ♗e7 13 0-0 ♖b8 (D).

Black has mobility problems: he prepares the break ...b5, although for the time being it is not possible. White pushes his centre, both e4 and f4 being possible. Now:

a) 14 h3 g5 15 ♗g3 ♖e5 and then:

a1) 16 f4?! is not convincing here: 16...gxf4 (not 16...♗g6? 17 fxg5 hxg5 18 ♖c4, nor 16...♗d3?! at once due to 17 fxg5 ♗xe3+ 18 ♖h2 ♖xb2 19 ♗c2, when White is winning) 17 exf4 ♗d3 18 ♗xd3 ♗e3+, etc.

W



a2) 16 ♖e1?! ♗f5 17 e4 ♗g6 18 a5 ♖fd7, preparing ...f5, is good for Black.

a3) 16 a5 ♖fd7 (16...b5? is wrong due to 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 ♗xe5!, getting a strong passed pawn) 17 f4 ♖g6 (not 17...♗d3?! 18 ♗xd3 ♗xe3+ 19 ♖h2 ♗xd3 20 fxg5 {or 20 ♖de4}), when Black's position has too many weaknesses) 18 ♖h2 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 20 ♗xa6 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♖xd5 22 ♖c4 ♖xc3, when there is so little material left that White's edge is minimal, Piket-Reinderman, Mondariz Zonal 2000.

b) Piket suggested 14 ♖e1, to lend strength to e4, and to defend e3 in particular, preventing the following typical resource by Black; if 14...♖e5?!, there follows 15 f4!, since now 15...♗d3? is impossible, whereas after 14...♖e8 15 ♗c2 ♖e5 16 e4 g5 17 ♗g3 b6, Black is forced to keep waiting.

11 ♗c4

This move gives the line a more novel look. After 11 ♗e2 ♗a6 (or 11...♗a6 12 0-0 ♖c7) 12 0-0 ♗xe2 13 ♗xe2 a6 14 a4 ♖bd7, Black has no major troubles.

11...a6

Ruling out ...♗a6, but seeking instead to exploit White's previous move.

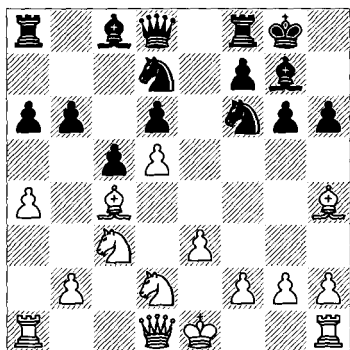
12 a4 ♖bd7 (D)

The situation of the c4-bishop encourages this development. A well-timed ...♖e5 will gain time on the c4-bishop, though as we shall see, there are lines where White can allow the exchange on c4.

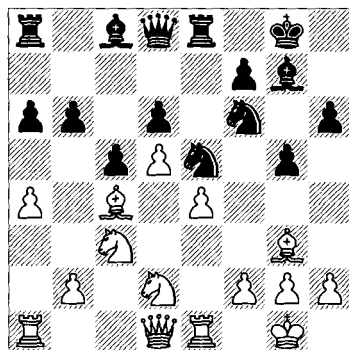
13 0-0

As we saw in Piket-Reinderman, Black has few chances of generating quick activity when he plays ...♖bd7. This led White to play a similar line a tempo down, with 13 ♗e2!? in

W



B



Kveinys-Kotsur, Istanbul Olympiad 2000. That game continued 13...♞e8 14 0-0 g5 15 ♖g3 ♘e5 16 h3 (White prefers to delay e4 in order to have the chance to play f4; interesting was 16 e4 ♘g6 17 ♖c2) 16...♙f5 17 ♙xe5!? (if 17 e4, Black retreats his bishop along the b1-h7 diagonal and then prepares ...f5) 17...♞xe5 18 ♘c4 ♞e8 19 ♙d3 (with the exchange White gets control of the b5-square, and justifies his avoidance of e4) 19...♙xd3 (despite appearances, 19...♙xc8 is interesting, seeking the break ...g4 thanks to the absence of defenders of the white king's position) 20 ♖xd3 ♞b8 21 ♘d2 ♖c8 22 ♞fc1 ♖b7 (threatening ...b5) 23 ♘c4 ♖d7 24 ♘a3 g4!, and Black, who can no longer play ...b5, got counterplay on the kingside. Instead the passive 24...♖b7 would have been met with 25 ♞ab1!, followed by b4.

13...♞e8

13...♖e7 is worth considering, not moving the f8-rook which can support a future advance ...f5.

14 e4 g5

The direct 14...♘e5?!, is strongly met by 15 f4! ♘xc4 16 ♘xc4, followed by ♖f3, when e5 is hard to stop.

15 ♙g3 ♘e5 16 ♞e1 (D)

16...♘g6?!

This retreat – intending ...♘f4 eventually – is too optimistic; it concedes too much space.

Black should adopt the tactical resource 16...♘h5! 17 ♙xe5 (not, of course, 17 ♖xh5?? due to 17...♙g4) 17...♞xe5 18 ♙e2 (18 ♖xh5?? now loses to 18...g4) 18...♘f4, and Black seems to be doing well after 19 ♘c4 ♞e8 20 ♙g4 ♙xg4 21 ♖xg4 ♞b8!.

17 ♙e2

17 ♙f1 is also worth considering, avoiding blocking any of the other pieces. With the text-move White hopes to use the bishop on the d1-h5 diagonal, although in the game continuation it would have been better to leave this diagonal free for the queen.

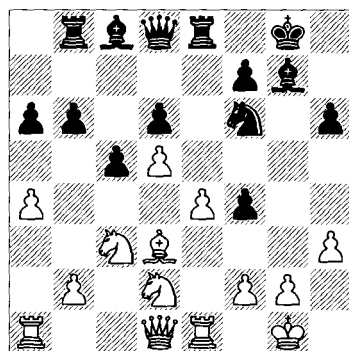
17...♞b8 18 h3?!

A mysterious and poor move. The natural 18 ♘c4 is much stronger. Then if 18...♘f4?! 19 ♙f3 ♖c7, White has the break 20 e5! dxe5 21 d6, showing that the surrender of e5 by 16...♘g6 was not a good idea.

18...♘f4 19 ♙xf4 gxf4 20 ♙d3 (D)

We can see that it would have been preferable to have had the option of ♖f3.

B



20...♘d7!

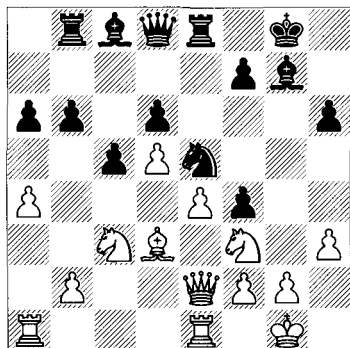
The control of the e5-square, together with the open lines he's got for his pieces, gives Black ample compensation for his inferior structure. The f4-pawn cannot even be threatened.

21 ♖e2 ♘e5

Protecting the a6-pawn, as if 22 ♙xa6?, there would follow 22...f3!, when 23 ♘xf3 ♘xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♙xh3 gives Black a strong attack.

22 ♖f3 (D)

B



22...♗h8!

The g-file is another line that has become open to Black's benefit.

23 ♖h1 ♖g8 24 ♖a3

This manoeuvre is mainly defensive, giving more support to the h3-pawn.

24...♖xf3!

Black installs a different piece on e5, while eliminating the defender of h4 and increasing the value of the g-file.

25 ♖xf3 ♖e5

Threatening ...♖h4.

26 ♖h5 ♖f6!

Protecting h6 in order to play ...♖g5. This is more ambitious than the favourable ending that results from 26...♖g5 27 ♖xg5 hxg5 28 f3 ♖d4.

27 ♖f1 ♖g5 28 ♖f3 h5!

Now the threat is 29...♖g4.

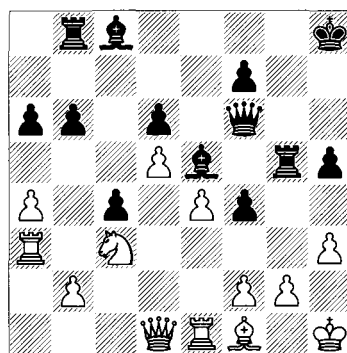
29 ♖d3

Getting off the h-file is not enough to avoid the threat: if 29 ♖g1, the line 29...♖g4! 30 hxg4 (or 30 ♖d3 c4! 31 ♖xc4 ♖xh3) 30...hxg4 31 ♖d3 ♖h5 gives Black a decisive attack along the h-file.

29...c4 30 ♖d1 (D)

If 30 ♖xc4, there follows 30...f3! 31 g3 h4!, and the lack of defenders of the king's position gives White no time for 32 ♖c7 because Black gets in first with 32...hxg3.

B



30...♖xh3! 31 gxh3 f3! 32 ♖e2

There is no defence – all the black pieces are attacking.

32...fxe2 33 ♖xe2 ♖bg8 34 ♖g2 ♖f4 35 ♖g3 h4! 0-1

Game 22 [A70]

Igor Khenkin – Chris Ward

French Team Ch 2003

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖f3 g6 7 ♖f4 (D)

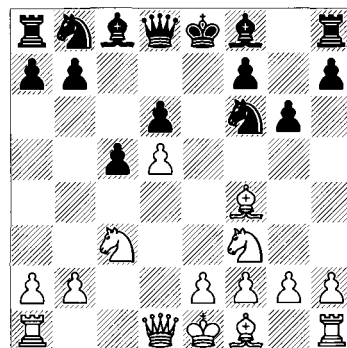
7...a6

Black wants to force 8 a4 so as to rule out the annoying check. If 8 ♖a4+? now, there follows 8...b5.

8 e4

White tries to show that Black's previous move was a loss of time, and speeds up his development, renewing the threat of ♖a4+. Now 8...♖g7 9 ♖a4+ b5? fails to 10 ♖xb5+.

B



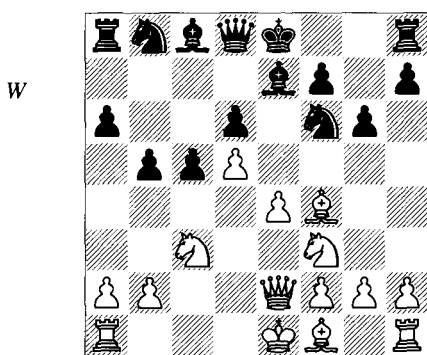
8...b5

The duel of ideas continues: Black seems to be saying that White has gone wrong by allowing this expansion.

9 ♖e2

This is a key move. White prevents Black's normal development – if 9...♗g7?!, there follows 10 ♗xd6! ♖xd6 11 e5 ♖e7 12 d6 ♖e6 13 ♖g5, regaining the piece with a big advantage.

Playing 9 ♗e2 or 9 ♗d3 doesn't create any problems for Black, who can develop comfortably with 9...♗g4, whereas 9 ♖d2 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 is met by the typical manoeuvre 11...♖e8!?, in order to break with ...f5; after 12 ♗g3 f5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 ♗g4 ♖d7 in Safin-Gelfand, USSR U-18 Team Ch, Kramatorsk 1989, Black achieved good play – the g7-bishop has increased its influence.

9...♗e7 (D)

As Watson points out, this looks disheartening. At first sight the development of the bishop to e7 instead of g7 is awful: the kingside is weakened, White has ♗h6, etc. However, exploiting these details is difficult: the white queen has to move so that White can continue his development, while Black's moves are clear. He will castle, followed by ...♖e8 and ...♗f8, with pressure against e4.

10 ♖c2

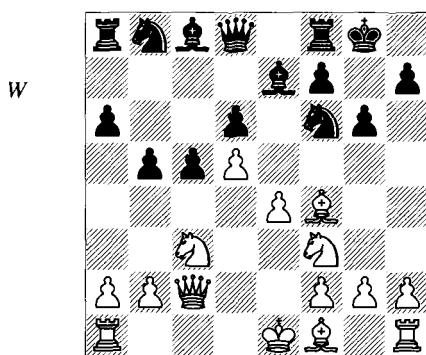
Other moves:

a) The direct 10 ♗h6 is met by 10...♖g4!, when 11 ♗g7? is no good due to 11...♗g8.

b) Neither does 10 0-0-0?! get anywhere: 10...0-0 11 h3 (11 e5?! ♖g4! 12 ♖e4 dxe5 13 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♖d7 15 ♗f4 ♖e8 16 ♖c2 ♖f6 17 d6 ♖xe4 18 ♖xe4 was played in

Alburt-D.Gurevich, USA Ch, Estes Park 1986, and here Alburt suggested 18...♗f5, with advantage to Black – the white king is insecure and the passed pawn is not dangerous) 11...♖e8 12 ♖c2 ♗f8. Garcia Paolicchi-Psakhis, Andorra 1997 had an abrupt ending: 13 e5? (reacting to the idea of ...b4, threatening to capture on e4; 13 ♖e1 is better, although Black is still fine – the queenside majority will be a threat to the white king) 13...dxe5 14 ♖xe5 ♗d6 0-1, for 15 ♖d3 c4 16 ♗xd6 cxd3 costs White a piece.

c) The break 10 e5 is worth considering, but Black is not in any great trouble after 10...dxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♖bd7. Then 12 0-0-0 ♖xe5 13 ♖xe5 ♖d6 14 ♖c6 can be met by 14...♗f8, followed by the development of the c8-bishop, ...♖e8, etc. The complications after 12 ♗g3 0-0 13 d6 ♖e8 14 dxe7 ♖xe7 15 ♖e5 ♖xe5! 16 ♗xe5 b4 17 ♖d1 ♖e8 (or 17...♖a5) that Watson analyses are not to be feared either.

10...0-0 (D)**11 a4**

Since there isn't anything promising in the centre and the kingside, White tries to weaken Black's structure before he regroups and finishes development. The text-move is Yakovich's favourite.

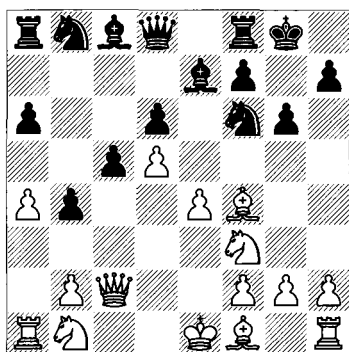
After 11 ♗e2 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♗f8 13 ♖d2, besides 13...♖bd7, we have to bear in mind the thematic continuation 13...b4 14 ♖d1 ♖xd5! 15 exd5 ♖xe2, played in S.Schneider-de Firmian, Copenhagen 1999. Sometimes this manoeuvre wins a pawn; sometimes, as here, it is an exchange sacrifice for a pawn. After 16 ♗e3 a5 17 ♖d3 ♗a6 18 ♖c4 ♖h4 19 ♖c1 ♖xe3 20 ♖dx3 ♖d7 21 ♖d1 f5 22 ♖e1 ♖f6 23 ♖f3

♗e4, Black obtained good compensation – the white pieces are very awkward, and Black can increase his activity.

11...b4 12 ♖b1 (D)

12 ♖d1 is also possible, with the same idea of occupying c4. It can be met in the same way as the text-move.

B

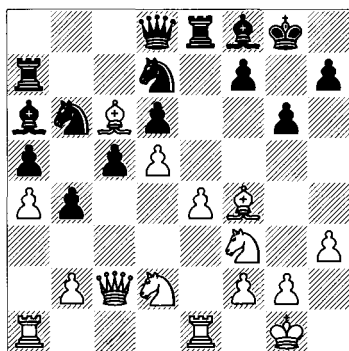


12...b3!

This resource, exchanging a flank pawn for a central one, appears in several lines.

The weaknesses of the queenside can become important if there is no counterplay. Yakovich-Filippov, Russia Cup, Ekaterinburg 1997 saw model play by White: 12...♗e8 13 ♖d3 ♖f8 14 0-0 a5 (to rule out a timely a5 fixing a6 and preventing Black's ...b6, although the new weakness on b5 is not to be ignored) 15 ♖bd2 ♖bd7 16 h3 ♖b6 17 ♗fe1 ♖fd7 18 ♖b5! ♖a6 19 ♖c6 ♗a7 (D).

W



20 e5! (this thematic break exploits the harmony of the white pieces, something the black forces lack) 20...dxe5 21 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 22 ♖xe5 (not 22 ♖xe8? due to 22...♖d3, when Black

seizes the initiative) 22...♗e7 23 ♗ad1 ♖d7 24 ♖g3 ♖f6 25 ♖h4 ♗d6 26 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 27 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 28 ♖e4, and the passed pawn is too strong.

13 ♗xb3 ♖xe4 14 ♖d3 f5

'Never going back' – this is playable, although let's not forget that it weakens the structure and the safety of the king. This is not important for the time being, but it has to be borne in mind in the future.

The natural 14...♖f6 is satisfactory; e.g., 15 0-0 ♖bd7 16 ♖c3 ♗b8 17 ♗a2 (this retreat is the result of the d5-pawn having become isolated) 17...♗b4! 18 ♖d2 ♖g4 19 ♖e4 f5 20 ♖eg5 ♖de5 21 ♖e2 (worse is 21 ♖xb4 cxb4 22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖c2 ♖xg5 24 f4 ♖g4 25 fxg5 ♗xg5, with a dangerous initiative) 21...♖xg5 22 ♖xg5 ♗d4, with a good game: d5 is weak, the white queen is playing a passive role, and Black's activity prevents White from exploiting the weakness on e6.

15 0-0 ♖d7 16 ♗e1

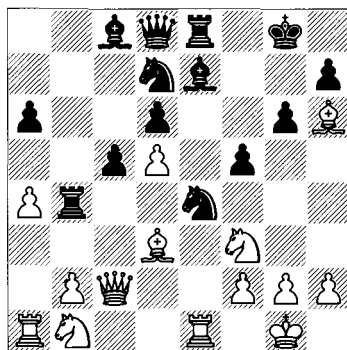
Against 16 ♖c3, there can follow 16...♗b8 17 ♗c2 g5! 18 ♖c1 (or 18 ♖e3 ♖xc3! 19 bxc3 g4 20 ♖e1 ♖e5, and Black is better placed) 18...g4 19 ♖xe4 fxe4 20 ♖d2 e3! 21 fxe3 ♖e5, with very good compensation – the queenside is undeveloped and the black pieces are very active.

16...♗b8

After exchanging the b4-pawn for the one on e4, we see that Black gets more out of the b-file than White does from the e-file.

17 ♗c2 ♗b4 18 ♖h6 ♗e8 (D)

W



19 ♖xe4?

White won't be able to keep the pawn, and Black's two bishops will be more important.

The c8-bishop gets into the game too. 19 ♖c3! is better; after 19...♗df6 20 h3 White has a reasonable game.

19...fxe4 20 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♗f6

The black pieces will enter the game quickly, targeting White's weak queenside.

22 ♗c2 ♗e5 23 ♗bd2 ♗f5

Black's advantage will become clear when he regains the pawn.

24 ♗b3

If 24 ♗d1, there are several options, the simplest being 24...♗d3, winning back the pawn.

24...♗xf3+

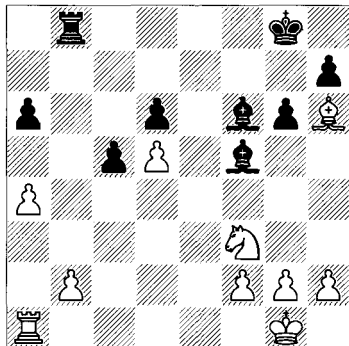
With the idea of forcing an advantageous ending. Another idea is to retain the queens with 24...♗f7 25 ♗e3 ♗a8, followed by ...♖b8, and the pressure on d5 and b2 will regain the pawn, with advantage.

25 ♗xf3 ♗b8 26 ♗xb8

Avoiding the exchange is not pleasant either – the black queen would get too active.

26...♖xb8 (D)

W



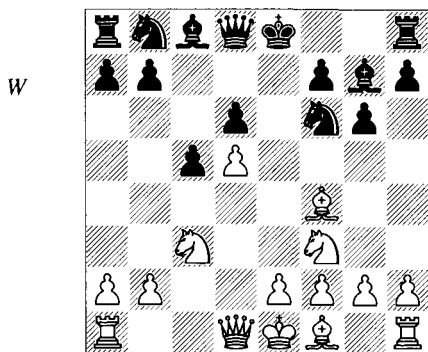
Game 23 [A70]

Stellan Brynell – Zoltan Almasi

Bundesliga 2005/6

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♖f4 ♖g7 (D)

Currently this move is considered inferior to 7...a6 because of the continuation below.



8 ♖a4+! ♖d7

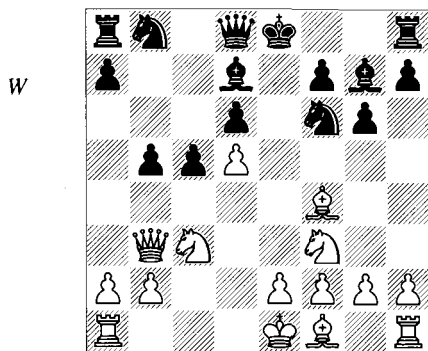
Due to the fact that the d6-pawn needs protection, Black has to make this move that hinders his development.

9 ♖b3

And now the pawns on d6 and b7 are under attack.

9...♖c7

The alternative is the pawn sacrifice 9...b5 (D), which is very interesting, although according to current theory the compensation is not altogether satisfactory.



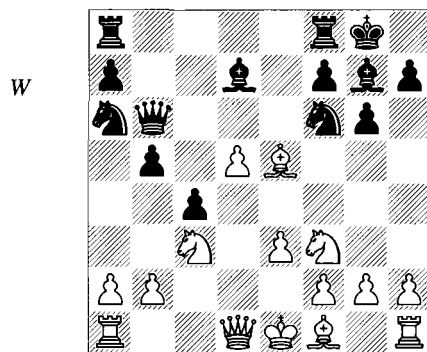
Now:

a) 10 ♘xb5?! is very risky: 10...♘b5 11 ♖xb5+ ♘bd7 12 ♖xd6 ♘e4 13 ♖e5 0-0 14 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 15 ♖a4 ♖b8! 16 ♖xe4 ♖a5+ 17 ♘d2 (even worse is 17 ♘d1?! ♖xb2 18 e3 ♘f6 19 ♖e5 ♖a4+! 20 ♘e1 ♖b4+! 21 ♘d1 ♖e8! 22 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 23 ♖c1 ♘f6 24 ♖d3 ♘xd5 0-1 Zsu.Polgar-Illescas, Bilbao 1987) 17...♖xb2 18 ♖d1 ♘f6 19 ♖c4 ♖fb8, and with the white king hounded by the black pieces, Black's compensation is more than adequate.

b) The best capture is 10 ♖xd6! ♖b6 11 ♖e5 (neutralizing the g7-bishop) 11...0-0 12 e3 c4 13 ♖d1 and here:

b1) 13...b4!? 14 ♘b1 ♖b5 is one possibility, although after 15 a4! ♖a6 16 ♘bd2 c3 17 bxc3 ♘xd5 18 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 19 cxb4 ♘xb4 (the advantages of including 15 a4 ♖a6 are felt in the line 19...♘xe3? 20 fxex3 ♖xe3+ 21 ♖e2 ♖e8 22 b5) White has 20 ♖b3 ♖xf1 21 ♘xf1, followed by g3, when Black's compensation seems insufficient.

b2) 13...♘a6 (D) and here:



b21) 14 ♖d4 is one of the popular continuations.

b22) 14 ♖e2 seems adequate too; for instance, 14...b4 15 ♘b1 ♖ac8 (if 15...♖b5, there follows 16 a4!) 16 0-0 ♖fd8 17 ♘bd2 ♖b5 18 ♖d4 ♖b7 19 a4 bxa3 20 ♖xa3 ♘xd5 21 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 22 ♖a1! and although Black has won back his pawn, his queenside is very weak,

Riazantsev-Cheparinov, European Ch, Batumi 2002.

b23) 14 a4 is an attempt to destroy Black's pawn-chain:

b231) If 14...b4, there follows 15 ♖b5 ♙xb5 16 axb5 ♖xb5 17 ♗d4 ♗b6 18 ♖xb6 axb6 19 ♙xc4 b5 20 ♙xb5 ♖c7 21 ♙a4 ♖cxd5 22 ♖e2, and White imposed his material advantage in Volzhin-Van Blitterswijk, Lausanne 2000.

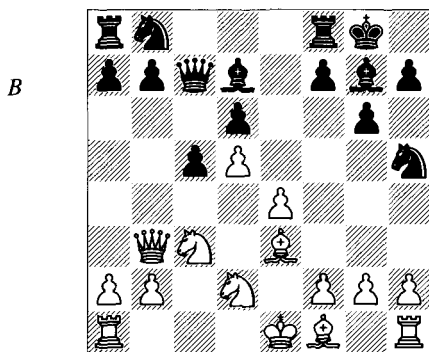
b232) 14...♖b4 is not convincing either: 15 axb5 ♙f5 16 ♖d4 ♙d3 17 ♖a4!, hitting the support of Black's initiative, the c4-pawn.

b233) 14...♖c5 15 axb5 ♙xb5 16 ♗d4 (16 ♙d4 seems better, in order to castle; likewise 16 ♙e2, when after 16...♖d3+ 17 ♙xd3 cxd3 18 ♗b3, Black's initiative has vanished but White's material advantage persists) 16...♖b3 17 ♖xb6 axb6 18 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 with some compensation for Black, Brynell-Hall, Swedish Team Ch 2003/4.

10 e4 0-0 11 ♖d2

The natural 11 ♙e2 has also been played, but with the text-move White immediately threatens 12 ♖c4. The bad placement of the d7-bishop forces Black to take radical measures.

11...♖h5 12 ♙e3 (D)



12...♙d4

The continuation most often used for years was 12...f5 13 exf5 gxf5, but master practice has shown that after 14 ♙e2 White's position is preferable; e.g.:

a) 14...f4 15 ♙xc5 f3 16 ♙xf3 ♖xf3 17 gxf3 ♖xc5 18 ♖xb7 and now:

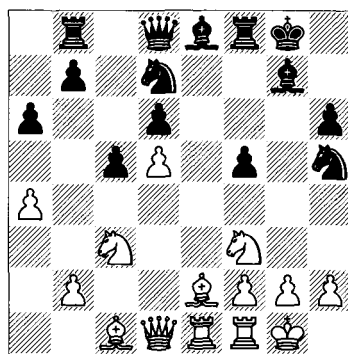
a1) The originally known path was 18...♙xc3 19 bxc3 ♖f4 and now 20 ♖g1+ ♖f7 21 ♖e4 (21 ♖g4!) 21...♖xd5 22 ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 23 ♖d1 ♙c6

24 c4 ♖e7 25 ♖xd6+ ♖e6 26 ♖e4 ♙xe4 27 fxe4 ♖d7 28 f4 gave White a material and positional advantage, and he duly won in Korchnoi-Nunn, London 1984. Moreover, Korchnoi pointed out that 20 ♖xa8 is even better, and this stands up to computer checking.

a2) 18...♖f4 19 ♖xa8 ♖d3+ 20 ♖e2 ♖f4+ 21 ♖d1 ♖b6 22 ♖g1 and Black had no compensation in Gavrillov-Kornev, St Petersburg 2002.

b) 14...♙e8 15 ♖f3 is another line that was used for a while. However, Black's active play doesn't compensate for his several weaknesses and his awkwardly placed pieces: 15...h6 16 0-0 a6 17 a4 ♖d7 18 ♖ae1! (preparing the following regrouping, after which all the pieces will be harmoniously placed; the same cannot be said about Black) 18...♖b8 (if 18...f4, there follows 19 ♙d2, and the e4-square is left in White's hands) 19 ♖d1 ♖b6?! 20 ♙c1 ♖d8 (D).

W



Here White advantageously carries out a typical manoeuvre to put f5 under pressure, usual in the King's Indian and similar positions: 21 g3!, preparing ♖h4, Piket-Van Wely, Monte Carlo (7) 1997.

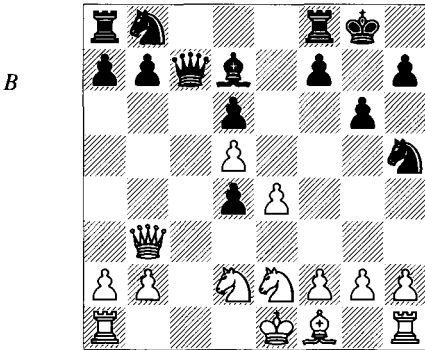
Watson recommends 12...♖a6, which is a logical developing move, bringing into play the last minor piece, but the problem is how to continue then: ...b5 is very difficult to accomplish. After 13 ♙e2, followed by 14 0-0, it is not clear how Black should follow up.

13 ♙e2!

White doesn't object to Black doubling his pawns; they will look terrible, but the f-file will be useful when the inevitable break e5 comes.

Furthermore the e4-square is made available to a knight.

White wins a pawn after 13 ♜xd4 cxd4 14 ♜e2 (D), although this means giving Black the chance of complicating the game, exploiting the fact that White has not yet finished his development.



Marin points out the manoeuvre 14...♜a6 15 ♜xd4 ♜c5 16 ♜c3 ♜b6!? 17 ♜c4 ♜c7 (threatening ...♜xe4) 18 f3 f5 and Black gets counterplay. He comments “that the compensation thus obtained leads to a complete equality from an objective point of view is something secondary; Black gets active play and practical chances” – if the alternative is passivity with even material, one has to choose the active path. One possible line is 19 exf5 ♜ae8+ 20 ♜e6 ♜xf5 21 0-0-0 ♜xe6 22 g4, and here Marin indicates 22...♜xd5 23 ♜xd5 ♜hf4 24 ♜d2 d5 25 ♜e5 ♜c6 with a complex position and some compensation for the exchange – there are open lines and the black pieces are active. Even more attractive is 22...♜ef4!? 23 gxf5 ♜xf5, which seems to give more than reasonable compensation for the exchange: the white king is uncomfortable, the black pieces are active, and White lacks coordination.

13...♜xe3 14 fxe3 ♜g7 15 0-0

The inconvenience the d7-bishop occasions is very important. It hinders the development of the whole of the queenside. The b8-knight doesn't have its natural developing square from where it controls e5, and therefore the break e5 is a very dangerous possibility for Black – perhaps it is already inevitable.

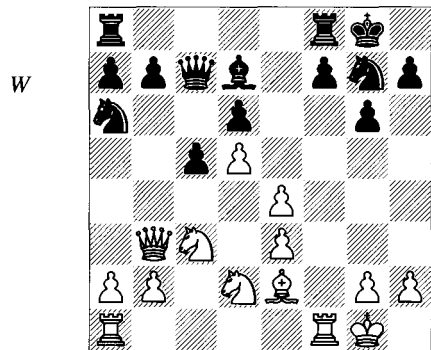
15...♜a6

Finishing the development of the queenside. But as in the line 12...♜a6, in these positions merely completing development is not sufficient if Black is then unable to generate counterplay or hinder White's initiative.

15...a6 has been played, trying to win space on the queenside. After 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♜ce4 b5 18 ♜ac1 c4 19 ♜f6+ ♜h8 20 ♜b4 ♜d8, White has several favourable continuations, such as 21 ♜d6, intending ♜xe5, and 21 g4, with the idea of ♜de4.

The 'safe' 15...f6 to prevent the break doesn't actually stop it – there follows 16 e5! (showing the potency of the white queen on b3) 16...fxe5 17 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 18 ♜f1+ ♜g8 and now there are three moves of similar strength: 19 ♜de4, 19 ♜ce4 and 19 ♜c4. For example, 19 ♜de4 ♜a6 20 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 21 ♜e4, and Black has to escape the discovered check d6+ with 21...♜b6, allowing 22 ♜f6+ and ♜xd7.

We now return to the position after 15...♜a6 (D):



16 e5!

White's advantage is possibly decisive after this break. He will get an overwhelming superiority of forces against the enemy king and none of the black pieces sitting on the queenside can be of any use.

16...dxe5

If 16...♜f5, trying to improve the coordination of the pieces, there can follow, e.g., 17 ♜ce4 dxe5 18 g4 ♜d6 19 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 20 ♜e4 ♜c7 21 ♜f6+ ♜g7 22 d6 ♜c8 23 ♜d5, winning back the pawn, with complete control of the game.

17 ♜de4

There are also several other very good moves, like 17 ♞ce4 or 17 d6 , getting d5 and e4 for the two knights; for example, 17... ♞b6 (17... ♞xd6 is worse in view of 18 $\text{♞de4 ♞c7 19 ♞d5 ♞d8 20 ♞df6+ ♞h8 21 ♞ad1}$) 18 $\text{♞d5 ♞xb3 19 ♞f6+ ♞h8 20 ♞xb3 ♞e6 21 ♞xa6 bxa6 22 ♞xc5}$, with an overwhelming advantage, but of course keeping the queens on the board is quicker.

17... ♞e8

Temporarily defending against the occupation of f6. Allowing it with, e.g., 17... ♞ad8 leads to a desperate position after 18 ♞f6+ ♞h8 19 ♞ce4 , threatening ♞g5 . But f6 is only one of Black's many weak points.

18 d6

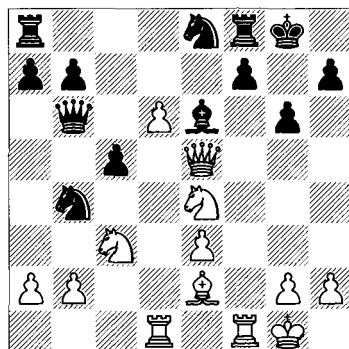
Not allowing Black's dream of blockading the pawn with ... ♞d6 .

18... ♞b6 19 ♞d5

Exploiting more of Black's weak points, the e5- and c5-pawns.

19... $\text{♞e6 20 ♞xe5 ♞b4 21 ♞ad1 (D)}$

B



White controls the whole board: the d6-pawn cuts all the communications among the black forces and stops any useful defence.

21... $\text{♞d8 22 ♞a4 ♞c6 23 ♞axc5 ♞g7 24 ♞f6+ ♞h8 25 ♞f4 1-0}$

With a double threat: against the b4-knight, and 26 ♞h6 .

Summary

In the note to Black's 8th move of Game 20 we see the typical tactical counter 11... b5? !, based on the combination ... ♞xe4 and ... ♞a5+ , but in the position of Najdorf-Fischer, Santa Monica 1966 White shows that it is not an automatic solution. There we can see how important it is to exchange White's dark-squared bishop before he plays e4, ♞d2 and f4, for the white bishop is an annoying attacker of d6, and the pin of the f6-knight can also become dangerous. This is also discussed on Black's 10th move of Game 21, in the context of Piket-Reinderman, Mondariz Zonal 2000.

The blow a4 is essential for White to weaken Black's structure before he can support it by playing ...c4 and ... ♞c5 . In the notes to White's and Black's 12th moves of Game 20 we saw the exchange of the white pawn on e4 for the one on the b-file, which is favourable to Black in both cases.

Black missed a tactical opportunity to get rid of the dark-squared bishop with 16... ♞h5! in Game 21, but after White squandered his chance to gain the advantage with the natural 18 ♞c4 , instead losing time with 18 h3? !, this was enough for Black to get a strong initiative.

In Game 22 White allowed Black to expand with ...a6 and ...b5, in return for causing some disorganization among the black pieces, although the disruption doesn't seem as serious as it might at first glance. White's break a4, to force ...b4 and get the c4-square, is a constant motif, used by White in the main game.

Let's remember another typical tactical motif, 14... $\text{♞xd5! 15 exd5 ♞xe2}$, played in S.Schneider-de Firmian, Copenhagen 1999, quoted on White's 11th move.

A little further along in Game 22, with 12...b3! Black secured a favourable exchange of his b-pawn for the one on e4. In the note to that move, we examine the alternatives, and can readily see the dangers of letting the moment pass. Black should not allow White to consolidate his game and defend e4 and strengthen c4, as also happened in the aforementioned game Najdorf-Fischer.

In Game 23 we see with 13 ♞e2! the need to consider the permanent weaknesses, such as the doubled pawns, in connection with the dynamic characteristics of the position. After the thematic break 16 e5! and 17 ♞de4 , carried out in ideal conditions, Black's position became critical.

7 Knight's Tour Variation

After the moves 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖f3 g6 7 ♘d2 we reach the basic position of the Knight's Tour Variation, used by Nimzowitsch against Marshall in the New York tournament of 1927, causing a great stir. White tries to put pressure at once on the weakness of d6 with ♘d2-c4, before deciding on the deployment of the rest of the forces.

In **Game 24**, Black plays 7...♗g7, allowing 8 ♘c4, and White chooses the unusual line 9 g3. The more standard options 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♗g5 are also analysed.

It is possible to neutralize ♘c4 with 7...♞bd7, so as to meet 8 ♘c4 with 8...♞b6, which is analysed in **Game 25**.

It is necessary to keep firmly in mind that White can use the Knight's Tour move-order as a means to transpose to the Classical lines (Chapter 1) while denying Black the popular ...♗g4-based ideas that can be used versus the regular Classical move-order. Black also has some additional options, most notably by omitting ...♞e8 (see Game 4), but otherwise he needs to choose his response to the Knight's Tour with some care, so as not to be 'move-ordered' out of his preferred repertoire.

Game 24 [A61]

Boris Gelfand – Baadur Jobava

European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005

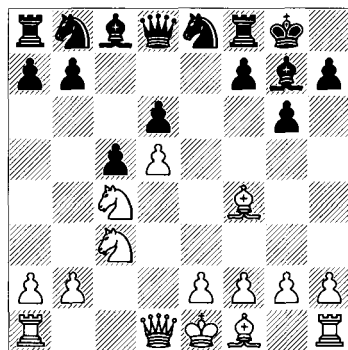
1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 g3

This is an original continuation. More usual are 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♗g5, where the theory is mostly based on old examples, and whose evaluation hasn't change much in recent years.

Against 9 ♗f4 Black has several options: the gambit with 9...♞a6, or 9...b6, followed by ...♗a6, trying to exploit White's lack of development, and the more popular and sound 9...♞e8 (D).

This retreat seems a significant concession, but there are compensating factors. In the first place it neutralizes the pressure against d6 once and for all, so that Black is free to prepare ...b6 and ...♗a6, getting rid of the annoying c4-knight. This manoeuvre is one of the most important ones to shake off the pressure against d6, and then come back to more active positions.

W

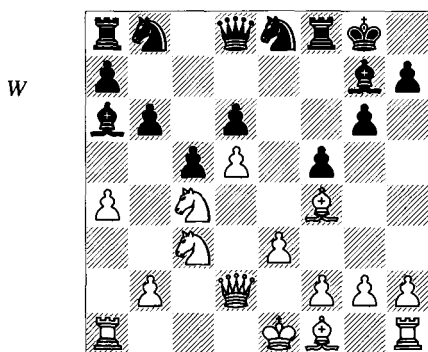


The move ...♞e8 also allows ...f5; for instance, against 10 e4.

A line that doesn't work is 10 ♘e4? b5! 11 ♘cxd6 ♘xd6 12 ♘xd6 (worse is 12 ♗xd6? ♞e8, winning material) 12...♗xb2 13 ♘xc8 ♗f6, and White's lack of development will hardly go unpunished.

After 10 ♖b5 ♕d7, the optimistic try 11 ♖bxd6 b5 12 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 13 ♖e5 ♖d6! 14 ♖d3 ♖xd5 gives Black the advantage, as Psakhis points out. Better is 11 a4, although Black has no major problems after 11... ♕xb5 12 axb5 ♖d7, followed by ... ♖b6.

The principal line continues 10 ♖d2 b6 (10... ♕xc3 11 bxc3 b5 is another idea, albeit somewhat riskier) 11 a4 (if 11 ♖b5?!, there can follow 11... ♕a6 12 ♖cxd6 ♖xd6 13 ♖xd6 g5! 14 ♕g3 f5, when White must sacrifice by 15 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 16 e4 ♕xf1 17 ♖xf1, with dubious compensation) 11... ♕a6 12 e3 (against 12 ♖b5, besides 12... ♖d7, giving up a pawn for the initiative, it is worth considering a manoeuvre pointed out by Watson, which can be useful in similar positions: 12... ♕xb5 13 axb5 f5 14 h4 ♕f6 15 e3 ♖f7 16 ♕e2 a6! 17 bxa6 ♖fa7) 12... f5 (D), and now White has to bear in mind a future ... g5 by Black.



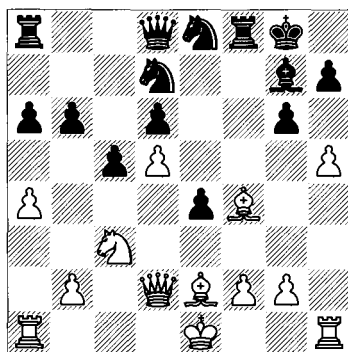
If 13 ♕g3, besides 13... g5, it is adequate to play 13... ♖e7, and if 14 0-0-0, Black's initiative is very dangerous after 14... ♕xc4 15 ♕xc4 a6 16 ♖b1 ♖d7 17 ♖he1 b5!, opening lines on the queenside.

After the developing continuation 13 ♕e2 Black can play 13... ♖f6 14 ♕g3 ♕xc4 15 ♕xc4 a6 16 0-0 ♖d7, followed by the slow preparation of ... b5 with ... ♖c7, ... ♖ab8, ... ♖b7, etc. This is satisfactory for Black, since White cannot sharpen the game quickly enough to exploit Black's leisurely manoeuvres.

Farago-Velimirotić, Amsterdam 1976 continued 13 h4 (a radical decision, implying that White is going to castle queenside, but the black pieces are prepared to open up lines with

...b5) 13... ♕xc4 14 ♕xc4 a6 15 ♕e2 (Watson mentions 15 ♖e2, preventing the exit of the b8-knight, and he continues with 15... ♖f6 16 ♕d3 ♖h5 17 ♕g5 ♖d7, although 15... ♖c7 is also worth considering, with the idea of ... ♖e7 and ... ♖d7, and the break ...b5 doesn't allow White to castle queenside in peace) 15... ♖d7 16 e4 (after 16 ♕g5 ♕f6 17 ♕h6 ♖f7 18 e4 ♖g7, it is logical to wonder what will happen to the white king: the black pieces are well poised to defend his king and to attack after ...b5 if White castles queenside) 16... fxe4 17 h5 (D) (if 17 ♖xe4, heading for e6, there follows 17... ♖e7, and if 18 ♖g5?! it is possible to play 18... ♕xb2!, for the white queen is overloaded).

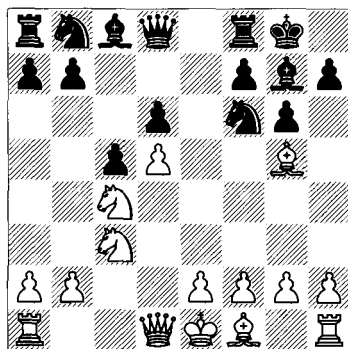
B



Black may try to exploit the situation of the white king and the lack of coordination of the white pieces through 17... ♕xc3! 18 bxc3 ♖f6, when White has no clear compensation for the pawn – the black knights are ready to occupy strong central outposts.

White's other main traditional option is 9 ♕g5 (D).

B

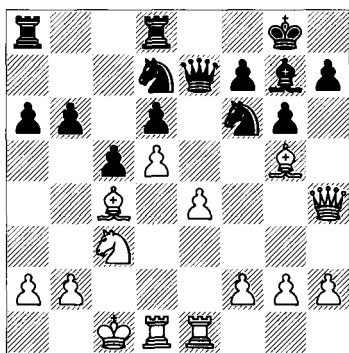


Since there is no pressure against d6, there are several replies, like 9...♖a6, to carry out the already-familiar manoeuvre ...♖c7, ...b6, ...♗a6, etc. There is also 9...♗d7, getting out of the pin, with the idea of ...b5, as well as a timely ...♗f5, or even ...♗g4; playing 10 a4 cedes the b4-square, thus allowing 10...♖a6 and ...♖b4.

One of the ideas of 9 ♗g5 is to provoke 9...h6, after which besides 10 ♗h4, it is possible to play 10 ♗f4, when the move ...h6 can become a drawback: the lines where the g7-bishop is exchanged are virtually ruled out.

Let's see the development of Portisch-T.Horvath, Hungarian Ch, Budapest 1984: 9...♗e7!? 10 ♗d2 (trying to exploit the pin with ♗f4, putting f6 under more pressure) 10...b6 (preparing the elimination of the c4-knight) 11 ♗f4 ♗d8 (this was prepared by ...♗e7, and is part of Black's plan) 12 0-0-0 (the pin cannot be exploited by 12 ♖e4?, as there follows the almost forced variation 12...♗xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♗xd8 b5 15 f3 bxc4 16 fxe4 ♗xb2 17 ♖b1 c3 18 ♖d1 ♗d7 19 ♖xb2 cxb2 20 ♖c2 ♖a6, when Black has the advantage – note the lack of development of White's kingside; this is old analysis by Yusupov) 12...♗a6 13 e4 ♗xc4 (if 13...b5?!, there follows 14 ♖xd6!) 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 ♗h4 ♖bd7 16 ♖he1 (D).

B



16...♗f8! (this is the culmination of the plan of ...♗e7 and ...♗d8: Black will break the pin with ...h6) 17 ♖b1 b5 18 ♗f1 h6 19 ♗c1 ♖b6 (19...c4 is worth considering, intending ...♖c5 or ...♖ac8 and ...b4, ...c3) 20 f4, and Black now failed to follow up consistently with 20...b4. The line indicated by Horvath is 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5, although here he misses 22...g5!, leading

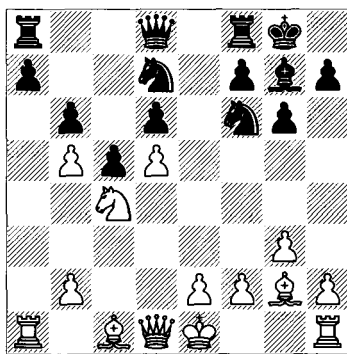
to a plus for Black after 23 ♗g3?! bxc3 24 exf6 ♗xf6, and the white king is very exposed. The b6-knight is ready to join the action, as is a rook on the b-file. Better is 23 ♗f2!, and since Black has problems with his king after 23...♖fxd5?! 24 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 25 h4!, he should opt for 23...♖g4 24 ♗f5 ♖xe5, although the position is still double-edged after 25 ♖e4, followed by h4. White gives up several pawns to weaken the black king.

9...♖g4

A new idea: Black wants to get rid of the annoying c4-knight with the manoeuvre ...♖g4-e5.

The more standard idea is 9...b6, to get rid of the c4-knight. After 10 a4 ♗a6 11 ♖b5 (if 11 ♗b3, there follows logically 11...♗xc4 12 ♗xc4 a6, threatening 13...b5), the 'easy' way out is 11...♗xb5, creating a weakness on b5, although the a-file is opened, with pressure on a7. Black managed to equalize in recent examples after 12 axb5 ♖bd7 13 ♗g2 (D).

B



Here 13...♖e5?! 14 ♖xe5 dxe5 is not convincing – the g2-bishop also gains in strength with 15 d6, and after the forced 15...e4 there are several possibilities, such as 16 ♗g5, but 16 ♗f4 seems best. After, e.g., 16...♗d7 17 ♗b3 ♖fe8 18 h4! h6 (the idea of h4 is that 18...♖h5?! is met by 19 ♗h3 ♗b7 20 d7) 19 ♗h3 ♖g4 20 0-0 h5 21 ♖a4, threatening 22 f3, Black's position is difficult – the d6-pawn has been strengthened, and Black has no counterplay.

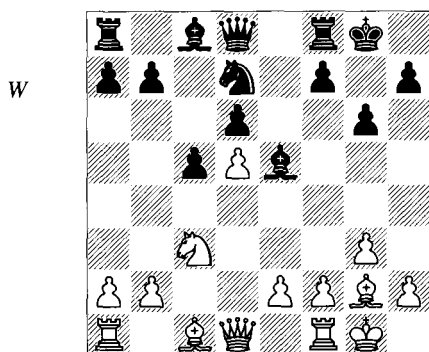
Ivanchuk-Topalov, Novgorod 1995 continued 13...♖e8 14 ♗f4 ♗e7 15 0-0 g5!? 16 ♗d2 ♖c7 17 ♗b3 f5, and here instead of 18 ♖ae1, met strongly with 18...f4!, it was better to play 18 f4!? gxf4 19 ♗xf4, when the position is not

clear after 19...♖e5 since both sides have significant weaknesses.

10 ♖g2

The alternative is 10 ♖f4, forcing 10...♗e5 with a change in the structure.

10...♗e5 11 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 12 0-0 ♖d7 (D)



13 ♗e4

This has more venom than the natural 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 e4 b5!? 15 ♖xb5 ♗b6.

13...♗c7

If 13...f5?, there follows 14 ♖g5, and the weakness of e6 becomes apparent after 14...♗b6 15 a4, as Gelfand points out. Allowing a pin by 13...♗e7?! 14 ♖g5 ♖f6 (if 14...f6, there follows 15 ♗h6) 15 ♗c1! is not attractive either: the e5-bishop is left looking 'silly'. The same would happen after 13...♖f6 14 ♖d2, intending ♖c4.

14 ♖g5 f5

Making the most of the fact that ♖g5 is not possible. In *Informator 94* Gelfand analyses the complications after 14...♗xb2?! 15 ♗e7 ♗xa1 16 ♗xd6, which favour White. He suggests 14...♖e8!?, keeping the options of ...f5 and ...b5.

15 ♖c3

15 ♖d2?, removing the pressure on d6, is inappropriate due to 15...♗xb2 16 ♖b1 ♖g7.

15...a6 (D)

16 ♖c1!

Preparing the thematic break b4. If instead 16 a4, there would follow 16...c4! and 17...♖c5.

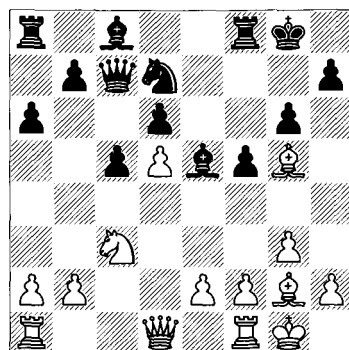
16...b5 17 b4 ♗b6

Gelfand suggests 17...♗b8!? 18 bxc5 ♖xc5 19 ♗e3, "with complex play".

18 ♗e3 a5 19 bxc5!

If 19 a3, there can follow 19...axb4 20 axb4 ♖a3, and Black becomes active.

W

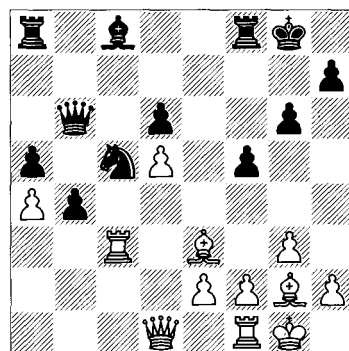


19...♖xc5 20 a4 ♗xc3!?

To prevent the knight from becoming an annoyance after 20...b4 21 ♖b5, followed strongly by 22 ♗xc5 and d6.

21 ♖xc3 b4 (D)

W



22 ♗xc5?!

Gelfand points out that here he missed the exchange sacrifice 22 ♖xc5! dxc5 23 ♗c1 ♗f6 24 d6! – White will capture a pawn, and the two bishops are terrific.

22...dxc5 23 d6 bxc3

Now Black also gets a very strong passed pawn and the draw is inevitable.

24 ♗d5+ ♖g7 25 ♗e5+ ♖f6 26 ♗e7+ ♖f7 27 ♗e5+ ♖f6 28 ♗xa8 c2

Instead 28...♗xd6 29 ♗xc3 would leave the black king exposed.

29 ♗e7+

Neither 29 ♗c3 ♗b4 30 ♗xc2 ♖xd6 31 ♖b1 ♖d2! 32 ♗c1 ♗d4 33 ♗f3 ♗a6 34 e3 ♗d3 35 ♖b6 ♖c2! nor 29 ♖c1 ♗xd6 30 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 31 ♖xc2 ♖a6, followed by ...♗d7, gives White anything special.

29...♖f7 30 ♗e5+ ♖f6 1/2-1/2

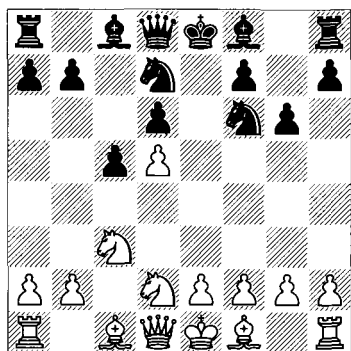
Game 25 [A61]

Boris Gelfand – Ognjen Cvitan

European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6
6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♘bd7 (D)

W



8 e4

Before playing ♘c4, White makes sure he has the option of dropping the knight back to e3 without hampering his development. If immediately 8 ♘c4, then 8...♘b6.

8...♘g7 9 ♘c4 ♘b6 10 ♘e3!

White retreats with the idea of driving back the b6-knight by a4-a5 and then returning to c4. Meanwhile, the b6-knight is hardly useful on that square and hinders ...b5.

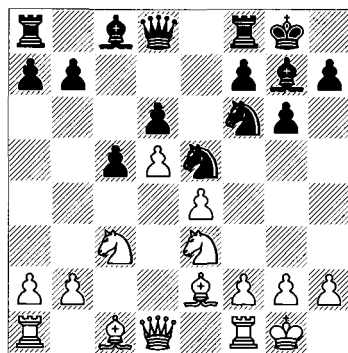
White has practically no choice in any case, as the exchange of knights would solve Black's lack of space. I.Ivanov-Kudrin, New York 1983 continued 10 ♘g5 ♘xc4 11 ♘xc4 h6 12 ♘h4 0-0 13 0-0 a6 14 a4 ♘d7 15 ♔e1 ♖b6, unpinning the f6-knight. It can go to g4, putting f2 under pressure, or to e5, while in the game after 16 ♖c2, Black neutralized the h4-bishop with 16...g5 and 17...♘h5, while he could also have prepared the thematic Benoni break with 16...♖b4!? followed by 17...b5.

10...0-0 11 ♘d3 ♘h5

11...♘bd7!? is also possible. Gulko-Lobron, Biel 1987 continued 12 0-0 ♘e5 13 ♘e2 (D), with the threat of 14 f4.

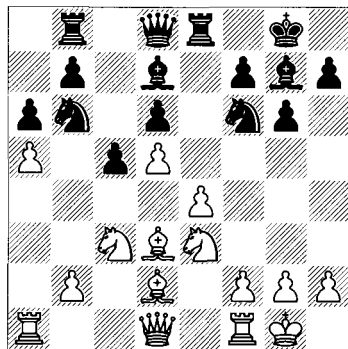
Here a characteristic idea borrowed from the ...♘bd7 Classical is useful, viz. 13...g5!?, stabilizing the e5-knight.

B



It is also possible to prepare the break ...b5, with useful moves such as ...♘d7, ...♖b8, and perhaps ...a6, so as to retreat the b6-knight at the proper moment and then be able to play ...b5 almost immediately. This is Watson's suggestion in *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*. Let's see his main line: 11...♔e8 (the pressure on e4 is always useful; in this case it allows an eventual ...c4 by Black) 12 0-0 ♘d7 13 a4, and here Watson recommends 13...♖b8, since 14 a5 ♘c8 15 f4 ♖c7 16 ♔e1 b5!? 17 axb6 axb6 followed by ...b5, with a reasonable game, is not to be feared. Of course, this is not a forced line, as White can delay the expulsion of the b6-knight rather than 'obliging' with 14 a5, forcing Black to make a move he must play anyway. 14 f4!? is worth considering. Ftačnik-Blodshtein, Pardubice 1992 continued 13...a6 14 ♘d2 ♖b8 15 a5 (D).

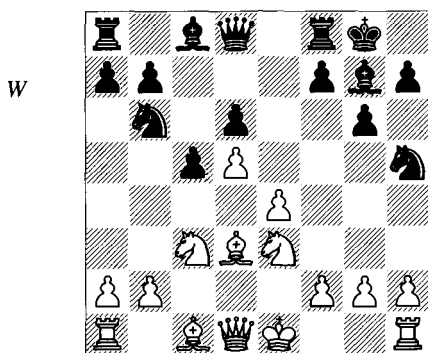
B



Here 15...♖a8!? is interesting. As we saw in other lines, when White plays a5 the b6-knight can seek the b5-square with ...♖a8-c7 or with ...♖c8-a7. On c8 it has the advantage of momentarily protecting d6, which White will put under pressure. Instead 15...♖a8 (and ...♖c7) has the virtue of defending the a6-pawn, which is important after, e.g., 16 ♖c4 ♖b5 17 ♖e1 ♖xc4 18 ♖xc4 ♖c7, and Black has everything ready to play ...b5.

The game continued 15...♖c8 16 ♖c4 ♖b5 17 ♖e1 ♖d7 18 ♖f4 ♖xc4 19 ♖xc4 ♖e5 20 ♖f1, and Black, who has no good counter, missed his light-squared bishop.

We now return to 11...♖h5 (D):



This move was chosen by Marshall in the historical game mentioned above. Black tries to become active on the kingside, making way for the f-pawn, the queen and the g7-bishop, and exploiting the fact that ♖e3 left f4 unprotected. However, if his initiative is stopped, Black will have lost tempi for nothing.

12 0-0!

Preventing ...♖f4 with 12 g3?! is dubious due to 12...♖h3. Then:

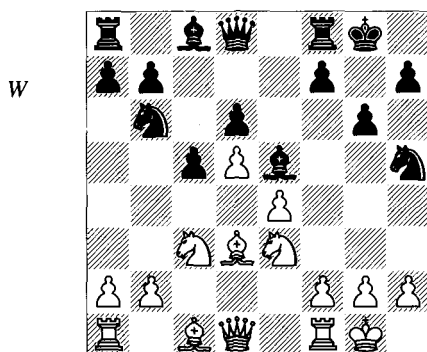
a) If 13 ♖f3?!, intending 14 g4, there follows 13...♖d7!, with the threat of 14...♖e5, and Black is doing very well; e.g., 14 ♖c4 ♖xc3+ 15 bxc3 b5!, followed by 16...♖e5.

b) 13 f4 was tried in Narciso-Volokitin, European Ch, Ohrid 2001, but with the king still in the centre White shouldn't be so optimistic. Here it is interesting to prepare ...f5; for example, 13...♖e8 14 ♖f3 ♖d4, and Black is ready for ...f5. The game continued 13...♖f6 14 g4?!, when 14...♖xg4! (*Junior*) 15 ♖xg4 ♖h4+ 16

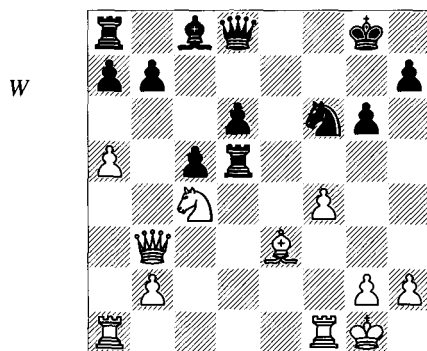
♖f2 ♖g2 17 ♖g1 ♖xh2 gives Black excellent prospects – the white king cannot escape scot-free: if 18 ♖e2, there follows 18...f5!.

12...♖f4

The stem game for the Knight's Tour Variation, Nimzowitsch-Marshall, New York 1927, continued 12...♖e5 (D).



White followed with the plan of regaining c4 with 13 a4!, and after 13...♖f4 14 a5 ♖d7 15 ♖c4 ♖xd3 16 ♖xd3 f5 17 exf5 ♖xf5, instead of the solid 18 ♖e4, he chose 18 f4!, sacrificing the d5-pawn. Following 18...♖d4+ (not 18...♖xc3? 19 bxc3! ♖f6 20 ♖e3, and Black has got rid of his valuable bishop without winning the pawn) 19 ♖e3 ♖xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♖f6 21 ♖b3!, White obtained good compensation, since it is not easy for Black to develop his queenside. Here Black unwisely chose 21...♖xd5?! (D).



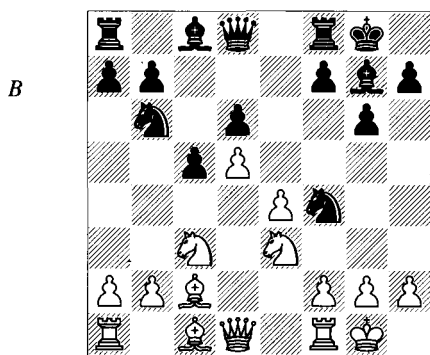
Now Nimzowitsch gave new life to the dark-squared bishop, with crushing effects on the black king's position: 22 f5! gx f5 23 ♖g5 ♖d4 24 ♖b6+ c4 25 ♖c3 axb6 26 ♖xd4 ♖g7 27 ♖ae1 bxa5 28 ♖e8! ♖xe8 29 ♖xf6+ ♖g8 30

♙h6 1-0. Thanks to the general conception of the game and this beautiful finish, Nimzowitsch won one of the brilliancy prizes of the tournament.

13 ♙c2! (D)

It is worth losing a tempo to keep this valuable bishop that targets the kingside and hinders Black's break ...f5. White threatens to drive back the f4-knight with g3 and continue his expansion with f4.

In case of 13 a4?! ♖xd3 14 ♗xd3 ♜e8 15 a5 ♖d7 16 f4, Black gets very good counterplay against the white centre with 16...♙d4 17 ♙h1 ♖f6 according to analysis by Nunn.



13...f5?

Nevertheless. This is a very risky decision: the black pieces, lacking in coordination, are not ready for a tactical duel.

There is no clear path to equality. Watson suggested 13...♙e8; for instance, 14 ♗f3 ♙xc3 (if 14...♗h4, there follows 15 ♖b5) 15 bxc3 ♗f6 16 ♙b1 ♖h3+ 17 ♙h1 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 ♖f4, although the evaluation of the ending after 19 ♖f5! ♙xf5 20 ♙xf4 ♖xd5 21 ♙xd6 ♖xc3 22 exf5 ♖xb1 23 ♙xb1 b6, as "giving Black adequate chances due to White's awful structure" is not convincing after 24 ♙d3!, threatening 25 ♙b5, and Black is hard-pressed to avoid bigger material losses – the black king is uncomfortable too.

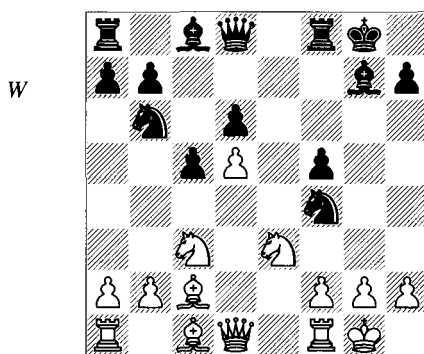
Gulko suggested 13...g5, but with 14 ♖e2!, White drives back or exchanges Black's best-placed piece and he will be able to exploit the weakness created with ...g5 (for example, after 14...♖xe2+ 15 ♗xe2 ♙d7 16 a4) both to drive away the b6-knight and to be able to play ♙a3

and transfer the rook to the kingside, combined with ♗h5.

14 exf5

Even better than 14 ♖xf5 ♖h3+ 15 gxh3 gxf5 16 ♗h5 ♗f6 17 ♙g5 ♗f7 18 ♗h4, which is also promising.

14...gxf5 (D)



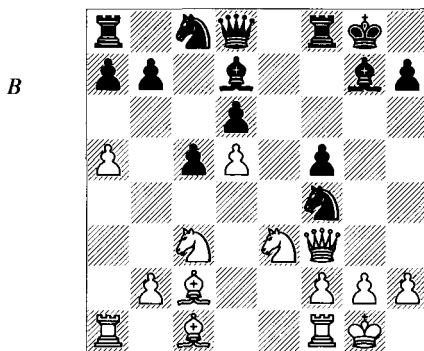
15 a4!

Following Nimzowitsch's idea, White tries to drive away the b6-knight. However, in this case rather than to occupy c4 it is to wreak havoc and attack the king more easily.

15...♙d7?!

This leaves the queenside disorganized. Kapengut suggested counterattacking with 15...♖g6 16 a5 f4!?, which is better, although in one of his main lines, 17 axb6 fxe3 18 ♙xe3 ♗xb6 19 ♗b1 ♙xc3 20 bxc3 ♗xb1 21 ♙fxb1 ♙f5 22 ♙xf5 ♙xf5, after 23 ♙xb7 ♙xd5 24 ♙f1, Black's position doesn't look good: White has the seventh rank, and after 24...a5 25 ♙a4, the black pawns are weak and the e3-bishop is better than the g6-knight.

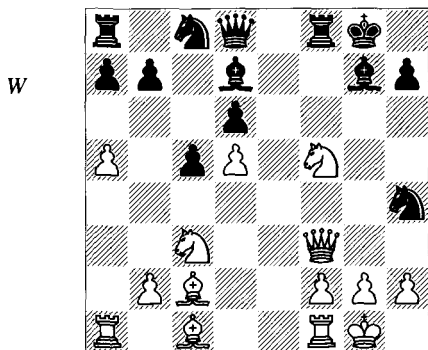
16 a5 ♖c8 17 ♗f3 (D)



Black cannot defend his weaknesses.

17...♖g6 18 ♖xf5 ♗h4? (D)

It is better, though sad, to play on a pawn down with 18...♗ce7 19 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 20 ♖h5.

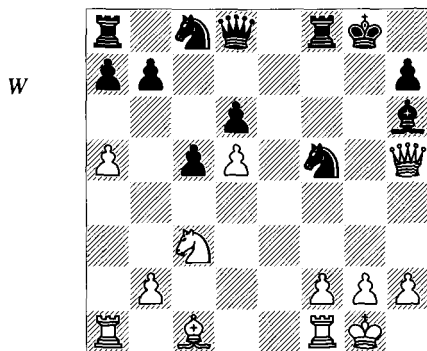


19 ♗h6+!

Due to the strength of the c2-bishop and the weakness of h7 Black can only hope to simplify and reach an awful endgame.

19...♙xh6 20 ♖h5 ♙f5 21 ♙xf5 ♖xf5 (D)

21...♙xf5 22 ♖xh6 ♗g6 23 ♗e4 is no improvement for Black.



22 ♙xh6 1-0

Black's resignation may seem premature, but after 22...♖xh6 23 ♖xh6 ♖f6, White can choose between a winning endgame with an extra pawn and better pieces, or retaining the queens and continuing the attack against the weakened black king.

Summary

On White's 9th move of Game 24, against 9 ♙g5 by White, we see the plan of 9...♖e7 and ...♗d8, culminated by 16...♖f8 and the subsequent ...h6, solving the problems of the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal.

Against 9 ♙f4, we see that defending with the passive 9...♗e8 is not bad, as long as one of the attackers is then neutralized; e.g., with the typical manoeuvre ...b6 and ...♙a6.

On Black's 9th move we analyse the exchange of White's b5-knight with ...♙xb5: after 12 axb5 the duel between the white weakness on b5 and the pressure on the a-file against a7 was in this case satisfactory for Black.

In Game 24 itself, once Black played ...f5, preventing White's usual progress on the kingside, the latter was successful with the plan of playing on the queenside with the break 17 b4.

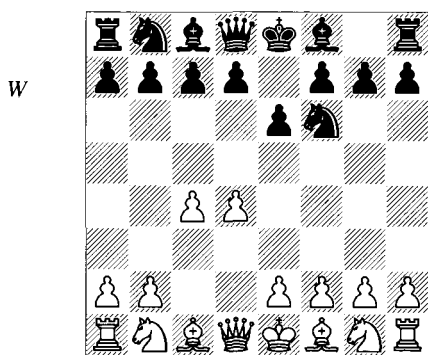
The principle that the side with more space should avoid exchanges is illustrated by 10 ♗e3! in Game 25. The absence of the g7-bishop is always perilous, as 22 f5! proved in Nimzowitsch-Marshall, New York 1927, given in the note to Black's 12th move.

With 13 ♙c2! in Game 25 White shows that it can be more important to keep an important piece than to avoid losing time. On the other hand, the thematic break 13...f5? proved unjustified with the king's position weakened – White's c2-bishop played a vital role in refuting this advance.

8 Transpositions and Move-Orders

It is possible to try to reach the main positions through different orders, but obviously delaying essential moves like ...c5 or ...e6 gives White additional options, and Black's repertoire must take these into account. Here we shall just briefly mention the pros and cons of a number of alternative move-orders, and indicate which additional lines Black must be ready for.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6



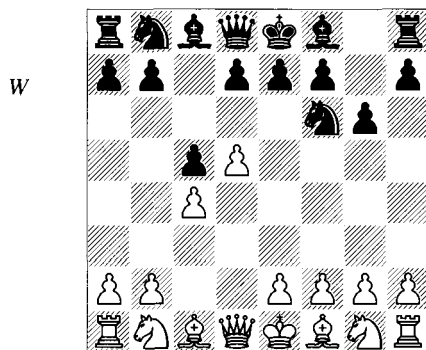
Many Modern Benoni players prefer to avoid some lines like those based on f4 of Chapter 4, the Knaak Variation or the Kapengut Variation of Chapter 5, and so they play ...c5 only after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 (or 3 g3). Of course against 3 ♘c3 it is necessary to have a defence ready, such as the Nimzo-Indian Defence or a line of the Queen's Gambit.

If after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5, White delays the advance d5 Black also has to have alternative measures ready; e.g., after 4 g3, 4 e3 or 4 ♘c3, it is possible to play 4...d5, leading to positions of the Tarrasch or Semi-Tarrasch Defence of the Queen's Gambit, where it is useful to have a good understanding of the structures with an isolated d-pawn and with hanging pawns.

Against 4 g3 and 4 ♘c3 it is also possible to reply 4...cxd4 followed by 5...♗b4(+), which can lead to similar play to lines of the Nimzo-Indian. This type of position can also arise from 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘f3, although in that case Black has some additional options, such as the aggressive gambit 3...cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e5 5 ♘b5 d5 6 cxd5 ♗c5.

After 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 it is Black who, besides the usual lines against the Fianchetto Variation, has an extra possibility, namely 5...b5, or 5...d6 6 ♗g2 b5, which has been used by an amazing number of top grandmasters, including Botvinnik, Keres, Tal, Korchnoi, Kasparov and Timman.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6



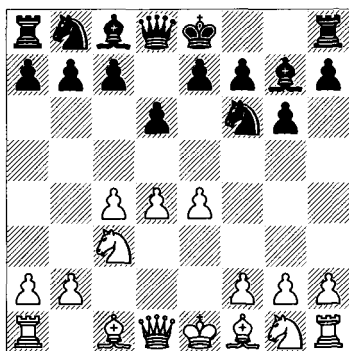
After this move-order Black tries to play a delayed ...e6 and ...exd5, reaching the Modern Benoni having avoided some lines such as the Taimanov Attack, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+, or the Mikenas Attack 8 e5, as well as the Knight's Tour Variation with a quick ♘d2-c4, which we saw in Chapter 7.

By delaying ...exd5, it is also possible to reach the Classical Variation avoiding ♘c4; e.g., after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♘c3 d6 5

e4 ♖g7 6 ♜f3 0-0 7 ♜e2 e6 8 0-0 ♜a6 9 ♜d2 ♜c7. In return, Black allows White to take on e6, which is not very worrying as long as Black doesn't delay for too long, but there are several more important lines where the advance of the pawn to e4 allows White to retake with exd5. For instance, after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♜c3 d6 5 e4 ♜g7 6 ♜d3 0-0 7 ♜f3 e6 8 h3 exd5 9 exd5 ♜e8+ 10 ♜e3, 10...♜h6 11 0-0 is a well-known gambit line, although there are several alternatives, including 10...♜h5 and 10...b5. Also in the Four Pawns Attack, after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♜c3 d6 5 e4 ♜g7 6 f4 0-0 7 ♜f3 e6 8 ♜e2 exd5, Black must be ready to meet the solid 9 exd5 as well as the dubious but tricky 9 e5?!

King's Indian

W



White can try to reach the Modern Benoni after several lines of the King's Indian Defence. We already saw that the Sämisch can lead to a Benoni: after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0, against 6 ♜ge2, 6 ♜g5 and 6 ♜e3, Black has 6...c5. White is not committed to playing d5, but according to current theory maintaining the tension doesn't lead to any advantage, nor does accepting the gambit by 6 ♜e3 c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♜xc5.

We have already mentioned some of White's alternatives in the Four Pawns Attack if he does not wish to transpose to a Modern Benoni. He can also vary earlier by avoiding d5; thus after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♜f3 c5, he can opt for 7 dxc5 ♜a5 or 7 ♜e2.

After 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♜f3 0-0 6 ♜e2 c5, White can delay the advance d5. After 7 0-0, Black can opt for 7...cxd4 8 ♜xd4 ♜c6 reaching a line of the Maroczy Bind (generally classified as a Sicilian Accelerated Dragon), or continue with 7...♜c6 8 d5 ♜a5, which is a playable line.

It is also possible to play ...c5 against lines like 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♜ge2 or 5 ♜d3, which after 5...c5 6 d5 e6 normally transpose to the Modern Benoni.

Even against the Averbakh Variation it is possible to try this: after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♜e2 0-0 6 ♜g5 Black can play 6...c5, when 7 d5 is one of the main moves, but 7 dxc5 is too.

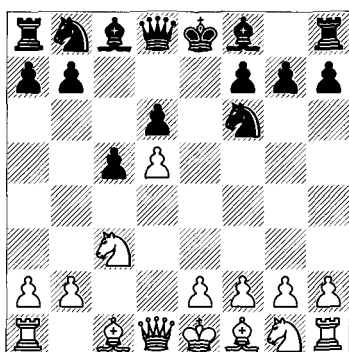
List of Games

Ralf Åkesson – Igor Nataf , <i>Stockholm 2003/4</i>	71
Levon Aronian – Kevin Spraggett , <i>Gibraltar 2005</i>	42
Evgeny Bareev – Boris Gelfand , <i>FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005</i>	56
Evgeny Bareev – Veselin Topalov , <i>Candidates tournament, Dortmund 2002</i>	52
Stellan Brynell – Zoltan Almasi , <i>Bundesliga 2005/6</i>	95
Miso Cebalo – Andrei Schekachev , <i>Biel 2003</i>	59
Viktorija Cmilyte – Katerina Lahno , <i>North Urals Cup (women), Krasnoturinsk 2006</i>	63
Alexei Dreev – Teimour Radjabov , <i>European Ch, Warsaw 2005</i>	78
Denis Evseev – Miso Cebalo , <i>Reggio Emilia 2005/6</i>	38
Boris Gelfand – Ognjen Cvitan , <i>European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005</i>	103
Boris Gelfand – Jesper Hall , <i>Malmö 1999</i>	15
Boris Gelfand – Baadur Jobava , <i>European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005</i>	99
Peter Leko – Vladimir Kramnik , <i>World Ch match (game 13), Brissago 2004</i>	19
Anatoly Karpov – Hichem Hamdouchi , <i>Bordeaux rapid (game 4) 2005</i>	30
Igor Khenkin – Chris Ward , <i>French Team Ch 2003</i>	91
Alexei Korotylev – Vladimir Akopian , <i>Moscow 2006</i>	6
Vladimir Kramnik – Veselin Topalov , <i>Dortmund 2001</i>	10
Michal Krasenkow – Andrei Volokitin , <i>Calvia Olympiad 2004</i>	27
Viktor Mikhalevski – Yehuda Grünfeld , <i>Givatayim 2004</i>	34
Hikaru Nakamura – Nick de Firmian , <i>San Francisco 2002</i>	47
Alexander Onishchuk – Hikaru Nakamura , <i>USA Ch, San Diego 2006</i>	23
Spyridon Skembris – Hristodoulos Banikas , <i>Kalamata 2005</i>	88
Pavel Tregubov – Aleksandr Poluliakhov , <i>Krasnodar 2001</i>	66
Dmitry Tyomkin – Pascal Charbonneau , <i>Montreal 2005</i>	84
Alex Yermolinsky – Alexander Shabalov , <i>Foxwoods 1999</i>	75

Index of Variations

1 d4 ♘f6
 2 c4 c5
 2...e6 (move-order) 107
 2...g6 (move-order) 108
 3 d5 e6
 3...g6 (move-order) 107
 4 ♘c3 exd5
 5 cxd5 d6

W



Or:

a) 7 h3 27:
 a1) 7...♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3 23
 a2) 7...a6 8 a4 (8 e4 30) 8...♖e7 28
 b) 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 ♗g7 9 e3 88
 c) 7 ♗f4 91:
 c1) 7...a6 91
 c2) 7...♗g7 95
 d) 7 ♘d2 99:
 d1) 7...♘bd7 103 8 e4 ♗g7:
 d11) 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8 15
 d12) 9 ♘c4 103
 d2) 7...♗g7 and here:
 d21) 8 ♘c4 99
 d22) 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗e2 19:
 d221) 9...♖e8 10 0-0 10
 d222) 9...♘a6 10 0-0 ♘e8 19 (10...♖e8 10)
 7 ... ♗g7
 8 ♗g2 0-0
 9 0-0 34

Now:

A: 6 ♘f3 without 7 e4

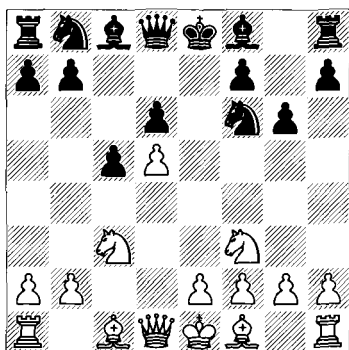
B: 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3

C: 6 e4 without 7 ♘f3

A)

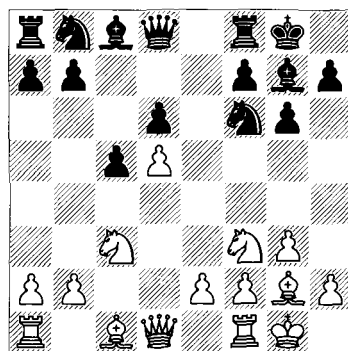
6 ♘f3 g6

W



7 g3

B



9 ... a6

9...♘a6 42

10 a4

Now:

10...♖e8 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 34

10...♘bd7 11 ♗f4 38 (11 ♘d2 34)

B)

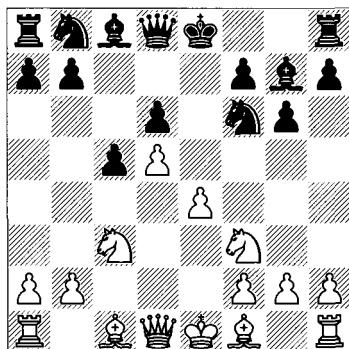
6 e4 g6

7 ♖f3 ♗g7

7...a6 30:

a) 8 a4 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 7

b) 8 h3 b5 30



W

8 ♗e2 6

8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 23

8 ♗g5 84

8 ... 0-0

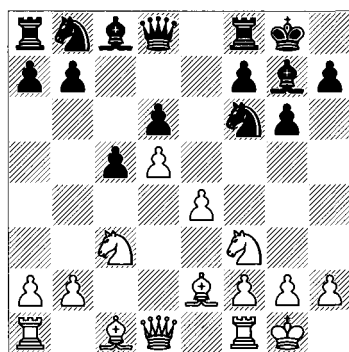
9 0-0

9 ♗g5 85

9 ♗d2 19:

a) 9...♗e8 10 0-0 10

b) 9...♗a6 10 0-0 ♗e8 19 (10...♗e8 10)



B

9 ... ♗e8 10

9...a6 6 10 a4 ♗g4 7

10 ♗d2

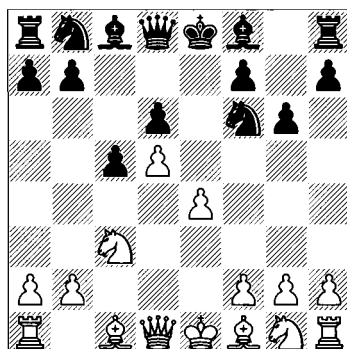
Now:

a) 10...♗a6 10 11 f3 (11 f4 63) 11...♗c7 11

b) 10...♗bd7 15 11 a4 (11 f4 66) 11...♗e5 15

C)

6 e4 g6



W

7 f4

7 h3 ♗g7 8 ♗f3 0-0 9 ♗d3 23

7 f3 78

7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♗ge2 0-0 9 0-0 71:

a) 9...♗e8 72

b) 9...b6 75

7 ... ♗g7 47

8 ♗b5+ 52

8 e5 47

8 ♗f3 59 8...0-0 9 ♗e2:

a) 9...♗e8 10 ♗d2:

a1) 10...♗a6 11 0-0 63

a2) 10...♗bd7 11 0-0 66

b) 9...♗g4 59

8 ... ♗fd7

9 a4

Now:

9...0-0 53

9...♗h4+ 56

Other Books from Gambit Publications

Chess Explained: The Meran Semi-Slav

Reinaldo Vera

Belying its solid classical appearance, the Semi-Slav is one of Black's most aggressive defences. The Meran is its traditional main line, and often leads to chaotic positions of immense strategic and tactical richness. This is territory where the player who has a superior 'feel' for the nuances will typically emerge victorious.

112 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$23.95 / £12.99

The Slav

Graham Burgess

The solid and popular Slav Defence gives Black abundant possibilities for dynamic counterplay. Here all lines after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 are discussed (except those that transpose to the Semi-Slav), and the sharpest tactical lines receive especially detailed coverage.

256 pages, 210 x 145 mm; \$22.95 / £15.99

Chess Explained: The Taimanov Sicilian

James Rizzitano

The Taimanov is one of the most flexible options for Black in the Open Sicilian. He avoids committing himself to a rigid set-up, and tailors his response once White has shown his hand.

112 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$19.95 / £12.99

The Ruy Lopez: A Guide for Black

Sverre Johnsen & Leif Johannessen

This book is a complete guide to handling the black side of the Lopez, based principally around the complex and exciting Zaitsev Variation, upon which Anatoly Karpov relied during much of his career.

208 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$28.95 / £16.99

Chess Explained: The Classical Sicilian

Alex Yermolinsky

Former US Champion Yermolinsky explains the key plans and ideas of one of his favourite openings. This dynamic Sicilian variation has been favoured by players such as Anand, Kramnik and Shirov.

112 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$19.95 / £12.99

Win with the London System

Sverre Johnsen & Vlatko Kovačević

The London System is a favourite of club players, as it is a sound and solid set-up with a real practical sting. Covers all responses to 1 d4 against which White can use the London.

176 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$25.95 / £14.99

Chess Explained: The c3 Sicilian

Sam Collins

The c3 Sicilian is one of the most popular ways to avoid the main lines of the Sicilian. White denies his opponent the chance to demonstrate his preparation in some chaotic system; instead Black will have to fight carefully for equality in a more rational position of White's choosing.

112 pages, 248 x 172 mm; \$19.95 / £12.99

Play the Classical Dutch

Simon Williams

An enthusiastic – and successful – adherent of the Classical Dutch explains the workings of his favourite opening, which provides Black with a complete aggressive repertoire against 1 d4. Few opponents will be ready to take on the Classical Dutch, since it has received little attention in chess literature in recent decades.

128 pages, 210 x 145 mm; \$18.95 / £12.99

About the Publisher: Gambit chess opening books are designed to be different. We recruit the finest authors, writing on their specialist systems. Our editorial team is obsessive about double-checking variations and transpositions. We believe trustworthy analysis is important, and that an openings book should remain an asset over many years.

GAMBIT

www.gambitbooks.com

Chess Explained is a new series of books about chess openings. They are not theoretical works in the traditional sense, but more a series of lessons from a chess expert with extensive over-the-board experience with an opening. You will gain an understanding of the opening and the middlegames to which it leads, enabling you to find the right moves and plans in your own games. It is as if you were sitting at the board with a chess coach answering your questions about the plans for both sides, the ideas behind particular moves, and what specific knowledge you need to have.

- 25 recent and highly instructive games discussed in detail
- Chapter introductions and conclusions emphasize the key points
- Full indexes of games and variations
- Extensive verbal explanations of plans and manoeuvres

The Modern Benoni is a perennial favourite among players looking to create winning chances with Black. It is one of the few openings where White has no easy way to force drawish simplifications or deny Black any dynamic counterplay. Both players need to understand the imbalances in the position and pursue their plans with great vigour. In this book Franco shows how Black can seek to create the kind of mayhem that has attracted champions such as Tal, Kasparov and Topalov to the Benoni, and also demonstrates how White can seek either to put a positional clamp on the game, or else to storm Black's position before his development is complete. A special section deals with the vital question of move-orders.

Zenon Franco is a grandmaster from Paraguay who now lives in Spain. For more than a quarter of a century, he has written a popular column for Spanish-language chess magazines. He is an experienced chess trainer, his most notable pupil being Paco Vallejo, now one of the world's top grandmasters, whom he taught from 1995 to 1999. He has written three previous books for Gambit, *Chess Self-Improvement*, *Winning Chess Explained* and *Chess Explained: The English Opening*.

Gambit Publications Ltd is:

Managing Director: Murray Chandler GM

Chess Director: Dr John Nunn GM

Editorial Director: Graham Burgess FM

For further information about Gambit Publications,
send an e-mail to: info@gambitbooks.com
<http://www.gambitbooks.com>

£12.99

\$23.95

ISBN-13: 978-1-904600-77-0

ISBN-10: 1-904600-77-8



9 781904 600770